



February 16, 2023

Dr. Christina Grant  
State Superintendent of Education  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
1050 First Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Superintendent Grant,

The D.C. State Board of Education (State Board) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft of new social studies standards that the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has shared for public comment. We would also like to express our gratitude for the hard work of the Technical Writing Committee (TWC) in producing this draft.

Pursuant to § 38–2652(a)(1)(A) and § 38–2652(a)(2), the State Board shall advise OSSE on educational matters including statewide academic standards and have approval authority over standards recommended by OSSE. During the April 1, 2020 State Board Working Session, OSSE proposed that the State Board’s role in the social studies standards revision process would be twofold, in accordance with the D.C. Code; the State Board would serve in an advisory capacity, articulating values and expectations for the standards, and it would eventually approve the revised standards. In order to develop this set of values and expectations, the State Board convened its Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee (SSSAC) in July 2020. The SSSAC comprised a diverse group of students, teachers, local education agency (LEA) leaders, curriculum developers, and relevant community organizations who endeavored to thoroughly review the existing social studies standards and draft recommendations to guide the State Board and OSSE in updating the standards to reflect the needs of current students and teachers. As a result, the SSSAC developed the [Social Studies Standards Guiding Principles](#)—nineteen recommendations for the new standards—which were adopted as official priorities by the State Board through [SR20-15, Social Studies Standards Guiding Principles](#) at the December 16, 2020 Public Meeting. In the ensuing months, OSSE’s TWC has developed a draft of revised social studies standards which was released for public comment on December 16, 2022. We appreciate OSSE’s flexibility in extending the public comment period and accepting the State Board’s comments after the February 10 public comment deadline.

The State Board is excited to review this initial draft of new social studies standards and at the prospect of approving a final version later this year. We look forward to working together to continue refining these standards, reinforcing the strengths of this draft, and addressing our outstanding concerns. Through internal analysis and public engagement, the State Board has developed suggestions for rectifying these issues and bringing the standards into closer alignment with the SSSAC Guiding Principles. The rest of this letter gives an overview of some of the

**District of Columbia State Board of Education**

441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suites 530S & 723N | Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 741-0888 | [sboe.dc.gov](http://sboe.dc.gov) | [sboe@dc.gov](mailto:sboe@dc.gov) | @DCSBOE





positive shifts in the draft social studies standards followed by revisions that would be needed before the standards are finalized.

## **Positive Shifts**

The State Board would like to begin this letter by celebrating some of the many positive updates that OSSE and the TWC have made to the social studies standards and ways in which the draft aligns with the SSSAC Guiding Principles.

### ***Student Civic Engagement***

One of the SSSAC Guiding Principles identified a need for increased attention to building skills related to student agency, participation, and voice. This Guiding Principle called for new standards to “provide a framework from which teachers can link coursework with engagement in real-world problem-solving within local, national, and international contexts through experiential learning by “doing” through service-, project-, and community-based learning” and “foster taking informed action” (p. 7). Throughout the draft, standards related to civic action appear as a recurring theme. This shift is most evident through the addition of a stand-alone action civics course in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In this course, students develop an understanding of government operations and how they can influence policy or organize for change. Many of the new standards ask students to identify problems in their communities and develop potential solutions, and we appreciate this through-line. We encourage OSSE to build on this positive shift by incorporating more ways to impart change on a global level since most of the civic action standards focus on local- or national-level organizing.

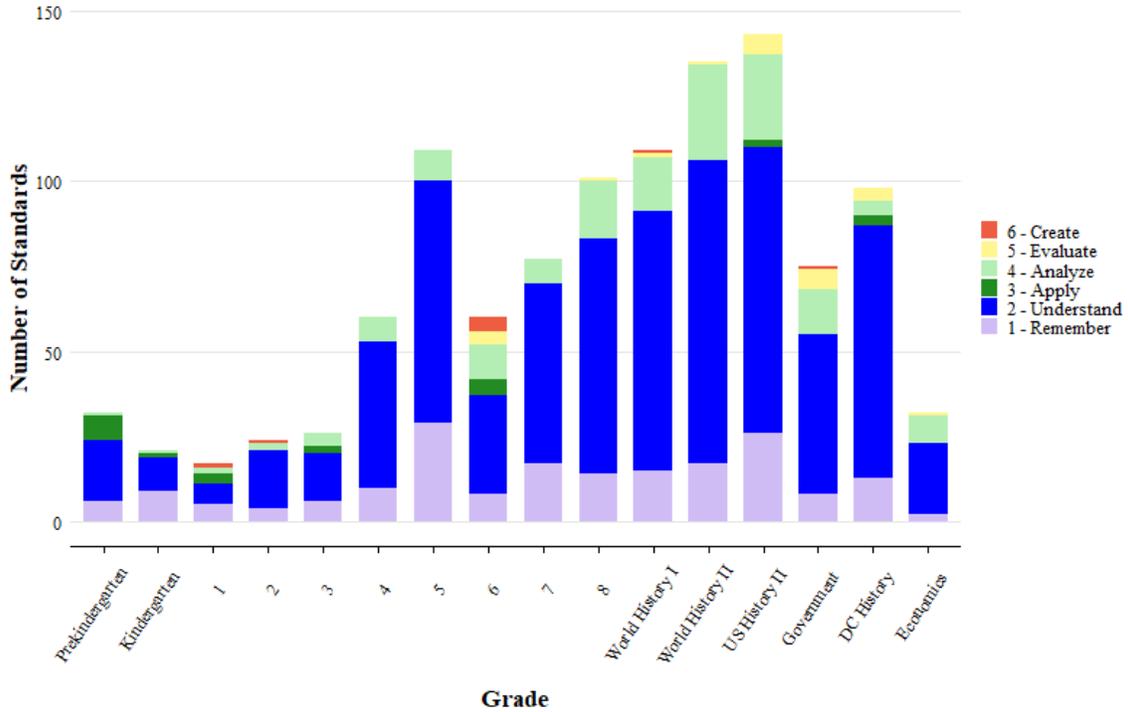
### ***Higher-Order Thinking***

One of the SSSAC Guiding Principles advised that the new standards should demand more rigorous thought from students per Bloom’s Taxonomy, “specifically higher-level action verbs regarding creation and justification” (p. 4). The TWC has made significant changes in the types of verbs that appear most frequently in the standards. In the 2006 version, the average standard asked students to understand the material (level 2). In the current draft, the average standard asks students to analyze concepts (level 4). Compare Figures 1 and 2 on the following page to see this difference. The State Board appreciates the incorporation of higher-order verbs in the standards because it encourages students to think critically about history and to develop a nuanced understanding of their position in the world; however, there are some instances in the draft where the standards may need to be revised to make the higher-order verbs more meaningful within the context of the standard. This concern is explained in more detail later in the letter.

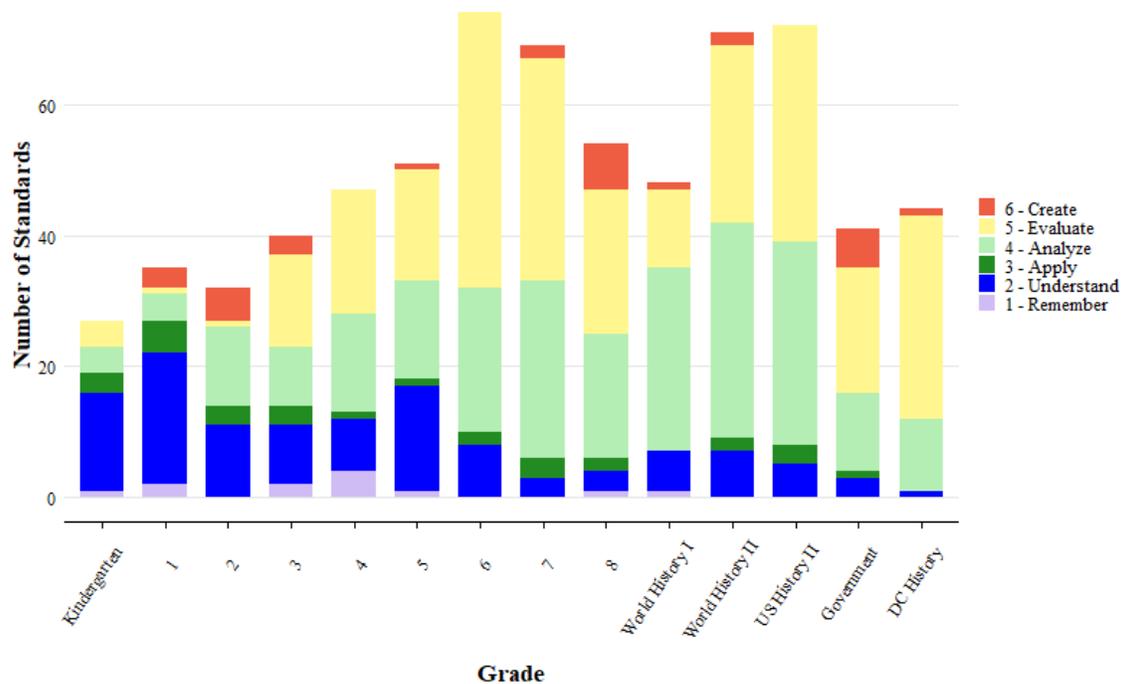




**Figure 1: Level of Thought Demanded by the Standards Per Grade (Current 2006)**



**Figure 2: Level of Thought Demanded by the Standards Per Grade (Draft 2022)**





### ***Environmental Literacy***

Another positive change in the draft is increased attention to environmental literacy. One of the suggestions in the SSSAC Guiding Principles was to “ensure students develop skills to investigate the causes and consequences of society’s impact on the environment and resolve challenges related to equitable access to natural resources” (p. 6). The draft includes an anchor standard about “Human-Environment Interaction” that highlights how societies interact with and change the environment including through agriculture, industrialization, resource management, and pollution. The inclusion of this through-line in the draft standards will help students understand the relationship between people and the planet and how society can work towards more environmentally responsible practices. The State Board would appreciate even more standards around environmental literacy, particularly in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and U.S. History II, which have a few standards that deal with environmentalism but none that are categorized under the “Human-Environment Interaction” anchor standard.

### ***Digital Literacy***

The SSSAC Guiding Principles called for the standards to teach students about “the laws, rights, and responsibilities when we access and use the internet” as well as to “empower students to be good digital citizens” (p. 7). Advances in digital technology since the previous standards were developed in 2006 have revolutionized the way that information is produced, consumed, and communicated. The TWC has incorporated some standards around digital literacy and critically evaluating online sources. A few of the standards also touch on how social media can be used as a tool for political engagement and reform movements. These standards are vital for developing students into engaged and informed community members in a digital age. The State Board encourages the incorporation of more standards related to digital literacy in earlier grades, particularly around online safety. Although there are standards throughout elementary grades that ask students to evaluate the validity and utility of sources in general, there are only two (i.e., 3.Inq.DC.31 and 5.Inq.DP.4) that directly mention digital sources from Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Many students currently have access to a significant amount of digital media at home and/or in the classroom from an early age. Therefore, the standards should not wait until middle school and high school to substantively cover content and skills related to responsible digital citizenship. Similarly, the standards for digital literacy for students in older grades could be more rigorous and include topics such as copyright laws and fair use, more advanced strategies for online research, and the impact of digital marketing and online advertisement.

### ***Humanizing Language***

The draft social studies standards include many examples of times that the TWC intentionally incorporated language that recognizes the dignity of oppressed groups. First, many of the standards focus on the humanity, lived experiences, and diversity of cultures amongst people who have historically been portrayed as monolithic in social studies classrooms. Examples include:





- 4.Hist.DHC.24 – “Using primary and secondary sources, explain the reasons for and experiences of individuals who were kidnapped and brought to the Americas from Africa as enslaved people.” (p. 49)
- 5.Inq.ID.11 – “Explain Indigenous resistance to territorial invasion, cultural and religious assimilation and attack (e.g., Geronimo, the Battle of Little Bighorn, and Ghost Dance movement).” (p. 56)

Standards such as these help students think about the cultures, identities, and human dignity of peoples who experienced—and often continue to experience—oppression. This connects directly to the SSSAC Guiding Principle “Recognition of currently under-represented groups” which called for standards that included “explicit attention to first-person accounts and recognition of people and groups that have been discriminated against throughout history” and emphasized that “groups that are not white cis male, need to not be treated as monoliths” (p. 8). The State Board appreciates this change and encourages OSSE to incorporate more such standards in upper grades and in world history where they are not as prominent.

The State Board also wants to highlight the draft’s inclusion of standards that require students to interrogate the language we use to discuss social studies content and the power that words have in shaping how we understand people and history. Examples include:

- 5.Inq.TA.15 – “Explain the importance of language when discussing challenging topics. (e.g., “enslaved person” rather than “slave”)” (p. 57)
- 6.Geo.HC.7 – “Analyze how terms and language used to describe different regions impact our understanding of those places and the people who live there.” (p. 68)
- US2.Hist.DHC.26 – “Analyze the response of Mexican Americans and Chinese Americans to the social, economic and political discrimination they faced, including the use of the label ‘foreigner’ for the American descendants of Mexican Americans and Chinese immigrants.” (p. 133)

In their relative brevity, the SSSAC Guiding Principles did not explicitly call for standards such as these, but they align with several of the Guiding Principles including “Knowledge framing: power & bias” and “Orientation towards ‘Hard History’ in both U.S. and World History.” Giving students the opportunity to critically examine the impact words have on others and their own understanding of the world is important for developing students’ information literacy and ability to engage in civil discourse in our technology-driven, multicultural society.

### ***Historiography & Interrogation of Evidence***

The draft social studies standards also include a thread to build students’ understanding of how historians develop theories about the past and the benefits and limitations of different types of





evidence. The SSSAC Guiding Principle “Knowledge framing: power & bias” called for standards where students would “*be grappling with the concepts of power and bias throughout Pre-K–12, especially from a historiographic standpoint*” and that “*students should be thinking about who produces the primary and secondary sources they consume to learn history, what their relationship to power is, what bias this might create, and what this means about who and what is left out or over-emphasized*” (p. 5). Additionally, the Guiding Principle “Skill: Social studies standards should include skills that complement the English Language Arts (ELA) Standards” highlighted the importance of teaching students critical thinking, historical thinking, and evaluation of information sources (p. 8). Many standards in the draft embody this interrogation of evidence and how historical narratives are developed, including:

- K.Inq.DQ.10 – “*Identify why artifacts are historically important and describe how artifacts help us learn about the past.*” (p. 18)
- 7.Inq.ID.15 – “*Assess the ways Indigenous Nations have been portrayed in American history and the limitations of such portrayals in understanding the diverse communities that comprise ‘Native American’ identity.*” (p. 82)
- US2.Inq.DP.52 – “*Analyze multiple historical interpretations about the end of the Cold War and analyze the evolution of interpretations over time.*” (p. 137)

The State Board appreciates how standards such as these encourage students to think critically about the information that is presented to them, assumptions and biases they might bring to a topic, and how to prevent contributing to the perpetuation of inaccurate or incomplete narratives about history.

### ***White Supremacy & “Hard History” in the United States***

The draft includes many standards that touch on the historical impact and ongoing legacy of white supremacy. This connects directly to two of the SSSAC Guiding Principles, “Knowledge framing: anti-racist” and “Orientation towards ‘Hard History’ in both U.S. and World History.” To frame the standards through an anti-racist lens, this Guiding Principle called for the incorporation of ongoing threads on the history of African Americans, Indigenous peoples, the African diaspora, and other communities of color; the impact of racial inequality on a global scale; the role of policy and history in shaping current racial and economic inequities; and the celebration of community cultural wealth (p. 5). To confront “Hard History” in the U.S. and abroad, the SSSAC called for standards that address the parts of history that are troubling and sometimes difficult to discuss including “*racism, white supremacy, antisemitism, classism, and sexism, as well as those forms of institutional and structural violence that are intersectional*” (p. 9). Standards on Hard History ensure that students understand the harm done by white supremacy in our nation’s past and the continued impact of that injustice today, including:





- 5.Inq.ID.16 – “*Explain that white enslavers adopted and spread false beliefs about racial inferiority and evaluate the impact of that ideology today.*” (p. 57)
- 7.Hist.HC.46 – “*Compare and evaluate the actions taken and rationales provided by the United States government to acquire western or Indigenous territory in the 1800s, with particular attention given to the policies and campaigns of President Andrew Jackson and the consequences such actions had on the land and people.*” (p. 88)
- US2.Hist.CCC.9 – “*Examine the systematized tactics and impact of widespread terror and violence implemented by mostly white men throughout, but not limited to, the Southern states to cease Reconstruction gains, naming and identifying this as a form of white supremacy (e.g., the rise of the Ku Klux Klan [KKK], violence at voting booths, etc.) and the impact it continues to have on US society today.*” (p. 131)

The State Board appreciates the inclusion of standards that cover how white supremacy has shaped history, particularly around the treatment of Black and indigenous people in America. We suggest that the revised draft could build on this foundation and explore more about how white supremacy has harmed other groups in the United States and abroad.

### ***Democratic Principles***

One of the SSSAC’s priorities for the new social studies standards was for students to gain an understanding of what it means to live in a democracy. The Guiding Principle “Knowledge framing: democratic citizenship, civic dispositions, and experiences” called for students to learn about the “*rights, responsibilities, and dispositions needed to live in a democracy, the mechanics of democratic government, and the values and principles underlying the United States’ founding documents*” (p. 6–7). Additionally, the Guiding Principle “Knowledge framing: power & bias” called for students to develop an understanding of the promise of freedom, equality, and justice described by the nation’s founding documents and the extent to which those values have been realized for different groups (p. 5–6). The draft includes many standards that discuss the events, people, and documents surrounding the beginning of the United States and the tensions between their ideals and the reality of America’s history of injustice and inequality. In light of the events that have transpired over the past few years, the standards could incorporate even more coverage of democratic principles, particularly around the peaceful transition of powers and the fragility of these democratic principles in our current society.

### **Recommended Revisions**

The State Board has developed a number of recommended revisions to bring the draft closer to the values and expectations of the SSSAC Guiding Principles as a whole and our shared vision of having the best social studies standards in the nation.





## *Reevaluation of Anchor Standards Labeling System*

One of the SSSAC Guiding Principles was “Ensure inclusion of and clear labeling of disciplinary content in the social sciences.” This Guiding Principles advised that “*a new system for identifying disciplinary content must be clear and should ensure that teachers and LEAs can easily use the standards in creating curriculum*” (p. 11). Currently, the anchor standards system of classifying standards is unclear and does not support ease of use for teachers and LEAs. As a result, the State Board recommends a reevaluation of the anchor standards system of categorizing standards.

Each of the **anchor standards should be sufficiently differentiated** so that it is evident how each standard should be categorized. At present, the descriptions of many anchor standards have significant overlap, leading to confusion about which standards should be placed where. For example, the distinction is often unclear amongst the three history anchor standards: “Continuity, Change, and Context,” “Historical Causation,” and “Drawing Historical Connections.” Discussing continuity or change in history is often a question of causation (i.e., elements of society change or remain the same as a result of people, movements, and events), and one of the most obvious historical connections to draw regards similarities and differences over time and across cultures (i.e., continuity or change within a particular context). The Inquiry Arc is particularly problematic when trying to define mutually exclusive anchor standards because most of the anchor standards in other disciplines also ask for students to be developing questions and claims, evaluating evidence, engaging in discourse, and/or taking informed action to solve problems.

This confusion has led to many **standards being misclassified under anchor standards that are not the best fit**. For example, 4.Inq.DP.5 “*Compare the development of agricultural practices across the Americas, including the Hohokam cultivation of corn, beans, squash, and cotton*” (p. 45) is currently listed under the anchor standard “Gathering Diverse Perspectives and Evaluating Evidence.” This standard would fit more naturally with the description of “Drawing Historical Connections,” in which students “*look between different developments within the same period and/or geographical location to develop complex understandings*” (p. 10) or under “Human-Environment Interaction” in which students “*gain factual knowledge about different environments and the ways that societies have interacted with them*” (p. 11). As another example, 7.Inq.ID.68 “*Use primary and secondary sources to analyze the ways and means by which formerly enslaved persons created new lives for themselves in the South, North and West following the end of slavery*” is currently categorized under the “Identity” anchor standard (p. 92). However, this standard aligns more closely with “Continuity, Change, and Context” which asks students to “*apply knowledge of major eras, enduring themes, turning points, and historical influences to identify patterns of change*” (p. 9) or with “Human Population Patterns” which asks students to “*examine the push and pull factors that lead to migration for different groups and evaluate the outcomes of these migrations from different perspectives*” (p. 11).

Another SSSAC Guiding Principle was “Content standards must be coherent, developmentally appropriate, and vertically aligned across grade levels Pre-K–12.” Among other things, this





Guiding Principle asked for standards to be organized to “*maximize learning connections across grade levels*” (p. 3). Ideally, **the standards listed under each anchor standard should work together to build students’ knowledge and skill over time and culminate in a thorough understanding of the anchor standard as described.**<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, that is not the case for many anchor standards in the draft. For example, the description of “The Global Economy” reads as follows: “*Students will analyze the costs and benefits of increasing economic interdependence on individuals, groups, and nations, with attention to economic growth, labor conditions, the rights of citizens, the environment, homeland security, resource and income distribution in different countries. They will interpret international global economic data and reports, evaluate the impact of specific aspects of global exchange, and propose solutions to problems that they identify*” (p. 14). See Table 1 for the eight standards currently coded under “The Global Economy.”

**Table 1:** All Standards Under “The Global Economy” Anchor Standard

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
6.Econ.GE.75	<i>Compare the costs and benefits of international trade policies and movements to different individuals, businesses, groups, and societies.</i>	78
7.Econ.GE.14	<i>Examine the economic and cultural impact of what is often referred to as the “Columbian Exchange,” or the widespread transfer of diseases, commodities, people, animals, and ideas as a result of European colonization and interaction with the Americas and other parts of the world.</i>	82
WH2.Econ.GE.11	<i>Analyze the effects of the transatlantic slave trade on Africa, the Americas, and Europe, including the lasting effects on fundamental beliefs about race and whiteness.</i>	119
WH2.Econ.GE.12	<i>Analyze the development of global markets and early multinational corporations, including global systems of banking, and their impact on colonized regions and European colonizers.</i>	119
WH2.Econ.GE.20	<i>Analyze the expansion of capitalism due to industrialization, and the development of communism as a result.</i>	121
WH2.Econ.GE.24	<i>Explain the detrimental impact of the European industrial revolution on global markets, such as the Indian and Egyptian textile industry.</i>	122
WH2.Econ.GE.56	<i>Assess the role of multinational institutions in state-building and negotiating conflicts after World War II.</i>	126
WH2.Econ.GE.58	<i>Assess the economic changes and continuities to markets, resource distribution, land use, and global wealth that resulted from decolonization and the Cold War.</i>	126

<sup>1</sup> See the [Common Core English Language Arts](#) anchor standards as an example of this use of anchor standards.





None of these standards coded as “The Global Economy” mention analyzing global economic data and reports, effects on homeland security, identifying problems, or proposing solutions to those problems. Furthermore, the only courses with any standards under “The Global Economy” are 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and World History II. This does not support the gradual development of knowledge about the global economy over time. If the standards listed under “The Global Economy”—or any other anchor standard—do not fully address the anchor standard as described, then standards need to be added to address those gaps or the description needs to be changed to match what students will actually learn from the standards.

One option to address the lack of clarity around the anchor standards could be to shift them to be more similar to the Guiding Principles for Effective History and Social Science Education (p. 13–17) and the Standards for History and Social Science Practice (p. 23–25) in the [Massachusetts Social Science Framework](#). These sections of the Massachusetts Social Science Framework describe what the state determined were the required elements of an effective history and social science education as well as an overview of the civic knowledge, dispositions, academic skills, and disciplinary skills students need that serve as “the foundation of active and responsible citizenship” (p. 23). There are other ways to address this issue as well depending on the intention behind including anchor standards in the draft. The State Board urges OSSE to clarify what its intention is and refine the anchor standards so they fit that goal and make the standards more usable for educators, LEA leaders, and curriculum writers.

***Vertical Alignment of Content and Skills***

Learning happens when students are guided through content that is slightly more advanced than what they already know or can do independently. As students develop from year to year, the standards to which they are held should build on previous years and become more demanding to facilitate continued learning. To that end, one of the Guiding Principles that the SSSAC developed was “Content standards must be coherent, developmentally appropriate, and vertically aligned across grade levels Pre-K–12.” The current draft needs revisions to ensure students develop their knowledge and skills over time and to reduce redundancies for teachers, LEA leaders, and curriculum developers.

**Standards that address similar topics across grade bands should work together to support students in developing a deeper and more nuanced understanding over time.** At the February 1, 2023 Working Session, OSSE’s presentation stated that “learning standards establish minimum expectations for the information students should master at each grade level.”<sup>2</sup> However, some of the draft’s related standards across the grades do not add additional demands onto students as they grow older and instead repeat the same expectations even though students should have already mastered them. If a standard is the minimum expectation for students in a grade, then the standards (i.e., the minimum expectations) should become more rigorous in older grades. Including an

<sup>2</sup> See slide 5 from [OSSE’s presentation](#) at the February 1, 2023 Working Session.





additional standard that is similar or the same in a higher grade is unnecessary because that minimum expectation should have already been met. One example of this repetition of similar standards across grades concerns the digital literacy standards, more than half of which ask students to do the same thing (see Table 2). All of these standards are a variation of asking students to evaluate the credibility of online sources and claims about a topic using strategies like lateral reading. In fact, the standards 3.Inq.DC.31 and DC.Inq.DC.42 are identical. If it is a minimum expectation for a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader to “evaluate the credibility of online sources and claims about contemporary political and social issues in Washington, DC using strategies like lateral reading,” then including it again as a minimum expectation for a 12<sup>th</sup> grader is unnecessary.

**Table 2: Standards on Evaluating the Creditability of Online Sources**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
3.Inq.DC.31	<i>Evaluate the credibility of online sources and claims about contemporary political and social issues in Washington, DC using strategies like lateral reading.</i>	42
5.Inq.DP.4	<i>Evaluate the credibility of online sources and claims about the history or impact of technological innovation using strategies like lateral reading.</i>	55
6.Inq.DC.11	<i>Evaluate the credibility of online sources and claims about climate change using strategies like lateral reading.</i>	69
7.Inq.DC.64	<i>Assess the source of a webpage or digital resource about the Civil War using strategies like lateral reading to evaluate the reliability of the source.</i>	91
8.Inq.DP.51	<i>Use civic online reasoning strategies, including lateral reading, to identify the source of a webpage or digital resource.</i>	101
8.Inq.DP.52	<i>Use civic online reasoning strategies, including lateral reading, to evaluate claims made by a webpage or digital source.</i>	101
WH1.Inq.DC.46	<i>Evaluate the credibility of online sources and claims about UNESCO World Heritage Sites or ownership of artifacts.</i>	115
WH2.Inq.TA.71	<i>Assess the source of a webpage or digital resource about the current political, social, economic and/or environmental challenge facing countries across the globe using strategies like lateral reading to evaluate the reliability of the source</i>	128
US2.Inq.DP.73	<i>Assess the source of a webpage or digital resource about a recent historical event using strategies like lateral reading to evaluate the reliability of the source.</i>	140
GC.Inq.DP.21	<i>Use civic online reasoning strategies, including lateral reading, to identify the source of a webpage or digital resource that provides information about a current political issue.</i>	146





GC.Inq.DP.22	<i>Use civic online reasoning strategies, including lateral reading, to evaluate claims made by a webpage or digital source that provides information about a current political issue.</i>	146
DC.Inq.DC.42	<i>Evaluate the credibility of online sources and claims about contemporary political and social issues in Washington, DC using strategies like lateral reading.</i>	158

That is not the only instance of such repetition between grades. See Tables 3, 4, and 5 for more examples:

**Table 3: Repetitive Standards on Geographic Features of the Thirteen Colonies**

4.Geo.GR.31	<i>Locate and compare key geographical, cultural and economic features of the Thirteen Colonies and their regions.</i>	50
7.Geo.GR.19	<i>Locate and identify the physical geographical, economic, and social features, as well as the demographics, of the 13 British colonies.</i>	83

**Table 4: Repetitive Standards on Comparing Media Sources on an Issue**

8.Inq.DC.55	<i>Compare multiple accounts from different news or media sources about an issue of concern.</i>	100
DC.Inq.DQ.43	<i>Compare multiple accounts from different news or media sources about an issue of concern, with attention to the credibility and perspective of each account.</i>	158

**Table 5: Repetitive Standards on Maps of the D.C. Region Over Time**

1.Inq.DC.25	<i>Analyze maps and images of the Chesapeake region and Washington, DC from different historical periods to describe the ways the community has changed over time.</i>	26
2. Inq.DQ.2	<i>Compare different representations of the Washington, DC and Chesapeake region, including maps representing the political geography of Indigenous nations, to develop claims about the changes to Washington over time.</i>	29
3.Geo.HE.6	<i>Analyze maps and images of the Washington, DC region, from different historical eras to develop claims about how the physical landscape has changed over time.</i>	39
3.Inq.DQ.12	<i>Evaluate the utility of different representations of Washington, DC and the Chesapeake region and use them to answer specific questions about the past.</i>	40
DC.Inq.DQ.1	<i>Evaluate different geographic representations of Washington, DC and the Chesapeake region to develop claims about how the city and region have changed over time.</i>	152





It makes sense for students to return to skills and themes they have practiced before, but when those topics reappear in later years, the expectation should be that the topic is explored with a deeper understanding of historical context, a more advanced skill, or a more nuanced lens. The State Board recommends that OSSE refine the vertical alignment of courses so standards are sufficiently distinct among grades. This will ensure that students can continue to sharpen their knowledge and skills over time and educators will not be held responsible for redundant standards.

We understand that the TWC worked in teams based on grade bands to write the draft according to members' areas of expertise. This strategy makes sense from the perspective of creating standards that are developmentally appropriate for students in different grades. However, OSSE now needs to take the grade bands and **integrate them into one cohesive set of K–12 standards**. At present, there are several noticeable differences between the grade bands in terms of vocabulary used, level of detail in each standard and driving concept, the number of examples and manner in which they are included, and the balance between standards related to skills, content knowledge, and thematic knowledge. The State Board recommends that before standards are finalized that OSSE check to make sure that the content and stylistic conventions are consistent across all grade levels.

### *Scale Back the Thematic Approach to Standards*

OSSE has shared with the State Board that the TWC has taken a thematic approach to drafting the new standards which is meant to give teachers more autonomy in the topics covered and encourage depth, rather than breadth, of instruction.<sup>3</sup> The SSSAC Guiding Principle “Fewer, clearer, higher: ensure content standards are rigorous” asked for the new social studies standards to be fewer in number and slightly more general or thematic. This thematic approach to standards allows us to move away from standards that are unnecessarily granular. In the draft, the clear attention that has been placed on a thematic approach has resulted in a vast reduction in the number of standards, particularly in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and above (see Figure 3). However, the State Board has concerns about the uneven application of the draft’s thematic approach across grades and subjects and the effects this will have on what content students are exposed to, as well as the standards document’s usability for educators, LEA leaders, and curriculum developers.

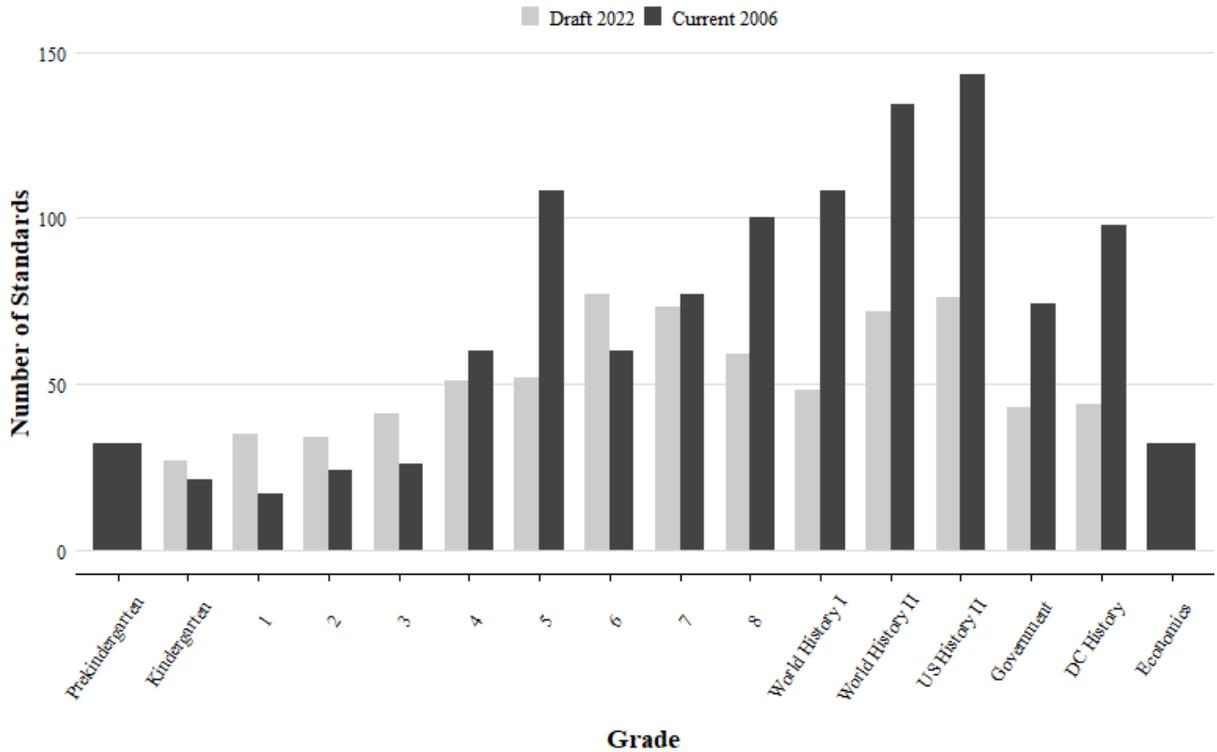
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<sup>3</sup> See slides 15–20 from [OSSE’s presentation](#) at the February 1, 2023 Working Session.





**Figure 3: Standards Per Grade**



Some of the thematic standards ask students to consider historical connections and movements within a specific era, geographic area, and/or topic. This will focus the study around that standard and help students draw connections and trace ideas and events as they unfold. Other standards, however, cover such a breadth of content that it becomes difficult to engage with them meaningfully and comprehensively. At a certain point, **the vagueness of some standards becomes counterproductive to OSSE’s intent to encourage depth over breadth and will lead to confusion for educators and curriculum developers.** Compare the scope of the standards in Tables 6 and 7:

**Table 6: Overly Broad Thematic Standards**

Standard Code	Standard Text	Page
6.Geo.HP.19	Analyze maps to trace the voluntary and forced migration of people within, from, and to Africa over time, and analyze the development of the African diaspora.	70
WH1.Civ.WG.23	Analyze the ways in which ancient empires in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, were governed, including decision-making, means of promoting the common good, and the relationships between people and their government.	110





**Table 7: Focused Thematic Standards**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
7.Hist.HC.18	<i>Analyze the reasons for and impact of Spanish colonization and settlement in the Southern and Western United States during the period, including resistance to Spanish colonization by Indigenous Nations.</i>	83
US2.Hist.CCC.12	<i>Evaluate the series of events that led to the end of Reconstruction – including the “Compromise of 1877” – and assess the impact on American political, social, and economic life.</i>	131

6.Geo.HP.19 is one of 77 standards for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and yet it asks students and teachers to trace the movement of people within, from, and to Africa and to analyze the development of the African diaspora. That is thousands of years of history and could easily be a course by itself. Expecting educators to cover 77 standards of that scope in one school year is not reasonable. The State Board recommends that OSSE **revise thematic standards to include context that narrows the scope of the themes and to ensure they are manageable for educators.** Although, as we have noted, we appreciate thematic standards that “*promote student understanding of complex ideas and concepts,*” without a strong foundation in historical content and how events have unfolded over time, the thematic standards will leave students with a disjointed understanding of history (p. 3).

The State Board also noticed that this **lack of specificity and focus in some thematic standards and absence of specific required content is not distributed evenly across courses;** it is more prevalent in courses with a global focus and most obvious in the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade World Geography and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade World History II courses. In other courses, there are standards that address specific content knowledge (e.g., people, events, social and intellectual movements) that students must learn. See Table 8 for examples of such standards.

**Table 8: Standards Requiring Specific Content Knowledge on U.S. History**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
4.Hist.DHC.40	<i>Examine key battles and historical figures of the American Revolution and the Independence movement including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Armistead Lafayette, the First Rhode Island Regiment and the Minutemen.</i>	51
5.Hist.CCC.50	<i>Evaluate the impact of key moments and figures in the fight for Black equality and voting rights including, but not limited to, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Freedom Rides, sit-in protests, the Little Rock Nine, and the March on Washington.</i>	63
US2.Civ.CE.60	<i>Assess reasons for the successes and unfinished work of the Civil Rights Movement, including the impact and legacy of Brown v.</i>	139





*Board of Education of Topeka, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Shelby County v. Holder.*

However, when looking at world history after 1450, there is almost no specific required content. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade World Geography does not define any required historical content apart from the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade World History II contains only a handful of standards that name examples of people or events.<sup>4</sup> The four that include required historical content relate exclusively to Europe (see Table 9 for these standards), and the few standards listing examples from other continents just include them as options.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 9: Standards Requiring Specific content Knowledge in World History II**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
WH2.Civ.US.15	<i>Analyze the context and major philosophies of Enlightenment thinkers, including John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Baron de Montesquieu and Mary Wollstonecraft.</i>	120
WH2.Hist.HC.21	<i>Analyze the impact of industrialization on the Russian Empire, including the Bolshevik Revolution and the creation of the Soviet Union.</i>	121
WH2.Hist.CCC.43	<i>Evaluate the cause, course, and consequences of the Holocaust.</i>	124
WH2.Inq.DC.59	<i>Analyze the reasons for and the results of the collapse of the Soviet Union on international affairs.</i>	126

The State Board is concerned that this lack of specifics in World Geography and World History II opens **the possibility that students may not learn about some important people or events at all**. Unfortunately, many teachers and curriculum writers were themselves taught through a Eurocentric lens and, as a result, may be more familiar with events, people, movements, and themes from Europe and the United States. Given teachers’ limited planning periods, they may default to what they know best, rather than spend additional time researching things that were not required or even suggested in the standards. Many teachers may take the time to research additional topics or figure out how to fit important events from across the globe into the broad thematic standards; however, the State Board recommends the standards document be considerate of the myriad demands and priorities that teachers already need to juggle by support them in making those decisions about what actually fits under different thematic standards.

The SSSAC Guiding Principle, “Clarity & transparency in the ‘canon’ included in the standards” noted that *“there are individuals and events that are critical for students to learn about, and the revised D.C. Social Studies Standards should require specific people, events, general movements,*

<sup>4</sup> There are a few standards that discuss World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, but those have not been included here due to the scope of those “events.” To be included in this list, the standards would have needed to refer to something more specific such as D-Day or the Bay of Pigs Invasion.

<sup>5</sup> For optional historical content, see WH2.Hist.HC.16, WH2.Hist.GE.24, and WH2.Hist.CCC.35





*topics, and themes*” while also providing flexibility on some of the examples provided (p. 10–11). Currently, it’s not clear or transparent why the only people who are included by name in World History II are Enlightenment philosophers, for example. Beyond considering standards as the minimum requirement for students in each course, the State Board encourages OSSE to view standards as also defining the content knowledge and skills that students have a right to acquire via schooling in the District. We feel, therefore, that **there must be careful consideration of which events, people, movements, topics, and themes are required in the standards and which students could possibly go without.** What is necessary to ensure students are entitled to an education that will—as the SSSAC Guiding Principles demanded—“*move beyond a ‘heroes and holidays’ treatment of history*” (p. 1)? As previously mentioned, the State Board recommends reducing the number of overly broad standards which should help make room for reincorporating more specific content that had been removed in the draft.

The State Board suggests that OSSE return to the question of **vertical alignment when considering what content is necessary and the level of detail in which it should be addressed in each course.** Again, particular attention must be paid to modern world history because only one course focuses solely on that topic, while early U.S. history, modern U.S. history, and ancient world history all have multiple years dedicated to those regions and historical time periods. For example, several standards in both 10<sup>th</sup> grade World History II and 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History II discuss the Cold War and the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union; however, there are no standards in World History II that necessarily call for coverage of the Chinese Communist Revolution, the Iranian Revolution, the Mexican Revolution, the military dictatorships in South America or the Philippines after World War II, the Civil War in Rwanda, conflict over the Kashmir region, the Arab Spring, and myriad other major world movements and events, many of which are required knowledge for A.P. Modern World History.<sup>6</sup> Not only that, but teachers may struggle to determine where some of these events even *could* fit within the standards. This is not to say that standards related to the Cold War do not fit within U.S. History II and World History II. However, given the robust coverage of that topic over multiple—sometimes consecutive—years and the lack of coverage of other topics, OSSE should assess the historical foci of standards and themes with attention to the coverage in other grades to ensure certain concepts are not over- or under-represented.

### ***Reframing Global Perspectives, History, and Cultures***

One of the SSSAC Guiding Principles, “Knowledge framing: global perspectives,” called for the new standards to “*include an explicit and ongoing thread that provides students with a global perspective and global context on their own lives, their history, and their society; that equips students with the content knowledge, skills, experiences, and mindsets that will help prepare them for careers and engaged citizenship in a culturally diverse and globally interconnected world; that explores not just comparisons but connections between peoples of the United States and the rest*

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<sup>6</sup> [A.P. World History: Modern, Course and Exam Description](#)





*of the world, historically and in the present”* (p. 7). One of the most frequent concerns that the State Board has heard from constituents about the draft argues that this global perspective is missing. With the inclusion of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Action Civics course, there is one fewer global-focused course, so it is especially important that the courses that remain expose students to the diversity of history and cultures around the world and that all courses are grounded in an understanding of global context and perspectives.

Currently, many of the standards about world history—particularly modern world history—in the draft are framed through nations’ interactions with the colonial powers of Western Europe and the United States. The State Board appreciates that the draft standards do discuss the immediate and enduring harms of colonialism and sees this as an important part of facing “Hard History” in the U.S. and abroad, as the SSSAC Guiding Principles recommended. However, without also acknowledging the unique history and perspectives of diverse nations in their own right, this presents students with the false narrative that Europe and the United States have been the driving forces in history and other places just respond.

Rather than focus on American and European perspectives and actions toward the rest of the world, a truly global perspective would consider the reciprocal impact nations have on each other and ways of understanding the world beyond traditional Western thought. **The history of the world is much more expansive than the actions of colonizing nations and the reactions of those who have been colonized, and the new standards must reflect that.** This concern is particularly visible in the World History II standards. This course touches on many topics from 1450 to the present, but the standards don’t require students to learn about the history of any place outside of Europe or the United States except in relation to interactions with Europe or the United States. Although a few of the standards toward the end of the course could theoretically be met without mentioning the United States or Europe, these standards could just as easily continue with the Western lens of the rest of the course. For the social studies standards to truly embody the SSSAC Guiding Principles “Knowledge framing: global perspective” and “Orientation towards ‘Hard History’ in both U.S. and World History,” they must explicitly grant students the right to learn *“holistic histories of different places around the world that do not begin or end with interaction with the West”* (p. 9).

This issue is also exemplified by OSSE’s rationale for the focus on ancient civilizations in the standards for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. At the February 1, 2023 Working Session, OSSE shared that the intention behind this shift was for students to “encounter powerful, robust histories of people of color before encountering people of color through lenses of slavery, colonization, and oppression” (slide 16). The State Board would like to challenge the notion that the standards must look back to ancient history for students to learn about powerful, robust histories of people of color outside of the context of slavery, colonization, and oppression. To that end, **the State Board encourages OSSE to revise the draft standards to de-center Europe and the United States and help students understand the rich experiences and history of people in other parts of the world beyond ancient history.**





One of the ways to foster this global perspective in students is to help them explore not only the connections but also the distinctions among people and cultures. When culture is raised in the draft, it is often in relation to specific cultures’ contributions to a larger, more diffused culture or society, rather than considering how cultural practices or ideas hold intrinsic importance to people within those cultures (see Table 10 for examples).

**Table 10: Standards on Culture Contributing to Broader Society**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
4.Inq.DP.34	<i>Evaluate the cultural and technological contributions of people of African descent — both enslaved and free — across the colonies to American history and society.</i>	50
6.Geo.HO.46	<i>Analyze Latin American and Caribbean cultural contributions to global culture, including art, literature, music, dance, cuisine, philosophy, or political thought.</i>	73
WH2.Geo.GI.70	<i>Analyze how imperialism and globalization contributed to the growth and diffusion of cultures across the globe.</i>	128

As mentioned previously, the thematic standards that are missing a distinct focus may discourage engagement with the nuances within and among cultures. In particular, the majority of the World Geography and World History II standards consider social studies on a continental or multi-continental level. Without narrowing these thematic standards and infusing a global perspective into the treatment of world history and cultures, the diversity of thought and experiences of people around the world will likely be lost.

***Furthering the Inclusion of Under-Represented Groups***

One of the SSSAC Guiding Principles, “Recognition of currently under-represented groups” addressed the need for standards to represent the multifaceted and intersectional histories and identities of the following people and groups: “*individuals with disabilities; LGBTQ+; Latino/a/x; women, particularly those of color; ‘regular [...] average’ people; indigenous people, especially after 1900; specific large immigrant groups in the D.C. metropolitan area; [and] religious minorities (e.g. Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Muslims)*” (p. 8–9). As previously mentioned in the positive shifts section of this public comment letter, the State Board recognizes that the TWC has certainly attended to this Guiding Principle when thinking about Black and indigenous Americans. We also recognize that there are at least a few standards throughout the draft that relate to most of these groups, which is more than many states can say about their social studies standards. When many jurisdictions are banning and censoring the history and culture of minority groups, the State Board wants to celebrate the ways that our District’s diversity is already represented in this draft. However, there are still substantive improvements that should be made before the new social studies standards are finalized so that they reflect the District’s ongoing work to make all schools places where students of all identities can flourish and learn about their own history and culture and that of others. These improvements are explained below.





First, the State Board recommends OSSE and the TWC revisit the discussion of religious minorities, keeping in mind the history and continued reality of oppression they have faced as well as how the standards can represent these groups as more than victims of oppression or relics of the past. Table 11 shows the standards explicitly referencing Judaism, and Table 12 shows the standards on Islam.

**Table 11: Standards Addressing Judaism**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
5.Inq.DC.38	<i>Explain how white supremacist groups founded in the aftermath of emancipation such as the Ku Klux Klan enacted terror against Black people but also against Jewish, Latinx, and Asian American communities.</i>	60
5.Civ.WG.41	<i>Explain the causes of World War II and the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany, and understand how bias and prejudice led to the scapegoating of marginalized groups in Europe, including Jewish, Romani, Slavic, disabled, Jehovah’s Witnesses and LGBTQ+ communities.</i>	61
WH1.Geo.HC.19	<i>Analyze the origins, beliefs, traditions, customs, and spread of Hinduism and Judaism.</i>	109
WH2.Inq.TA.36	<i>Investigate anti-Semitism in the 20th and 21st centuries and identify current organizations and people fighting anti-Semitism, hate, and violence, in the US and the world.</i>	124
WH.Hist.CCC.43	<i>Evaluate the cause, course, and consequences of the Holocaust.</i>	124
US2.Civ.WG.39	<i>Evaluate the reasons for the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe and the scapegoating of historically marginalized peoples (including Jewish, Romani, Slavic, disabled, and LGBTQ+ communities) by Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco.</i>	136

**Table 12: Standards Addressing Islam**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>
WH1.Geo.HC.22	<i>Compare and contrast the tenets of various belief systems that developed in ancient empires and how they spread, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism</i>	110
WH2.Hist.HC.2	<i>Analyze how advancements in technology and the spread of knowledge and scientific learning from Islamic and Asian societies promoted maritime exploration and ultimately the expansion of empires</i>	118

If these are the only times that students are required to engage around Judaism and Islam in social studies, the State Board does not believe that students will be equipped with a nuanced understanding of either religion, its relation to history, or its place in society today. For example,





Judaism is discussed almost exclusively in relation to fascist movements; while acknowledging that history is certainly important, failing to acknowledge Judaism in other contexts or the robust anti-Nazi resistance from Jews and other groups will impart students with a reductive concept of Jewish history. Particularly if we consider the rise in antisemitic<sup>7</sup> and Islamophobic<sup>8</sup> hate in American society which does permeate into schools,<sup>9,10</sup> **the social studies standards need to actively combat false narratives about different religions and empower students with the knowledge and civic skills to stand against such hate.** The SSSAC Guiding Principles also called for coverage of Hinduism and Sikhism in the standards. There are currently over a billion people who practice one of those religions today, and yet the draft includes one standard on Hinduism in World History I and none on Sikhism. This oversight should be addressed.

The State Board encourages OSSE and the TWC to evaluate the standards about other traditionally under-represented groups to determine what narrative is being created when viewed together.

For example, the standards discussing Asian Americans also leave students with an incomplete picture. The major topics the draft covers regarding Asian Americans are the motivations and experiences of Chinese immigrants working in the Western United States in the mid-1800s, the motivations and experiences of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. in the early-1900s, the response of Mexican Americans and Chinese Americans at that time to being labeled as a foreigner, and the United States government’s internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Despite the standard that asks students to interrogate the use of the label “foreigner” for descendants of Chinese immigrants, most standards in the draft that discuss Asian American experiences do so in the context of immigration and othering. The other times that the standards include Asian Americans, they are generally one on a list of many diverse groups of people students are asked to consider regarding a particular broad theme (e.g., oppression during the Reconstruction Era, experiences of diverse servicemembers upon returning from World War II, movements for increased equality in the mid-1900s). Unfortunately, like antisemitism and Islamophobia, anti-Asian hate has been on the rise in the United States in recent years.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the State Board urges OSSE to consider how the standards can be a tool to counter bias and disinformation about Asian Americans and paint a more expansive picture of Asian Americans’ experiences.

As with standards about Asian Americans, the draft standards addressing Latinx history and culture may not leave students with a full and nuanced understanding. There are very few standards that require students to learn about the long history of Latinx people in the United States. Apart from those about the Mexican-American War and the standard mentioned above about Mexican and Chinese Americans being labeled as “foreigners” (US2.Hist.DHC.26), Latinx people are also

<sup>7</sup> A [story on the rise in antisemitic incidents in the U.S. in recent years](#) from PBS.

<sup>8</sup> A [report on the rise in assaults against Muslims in the U.S. in recent years](#) from the Pew Research Center.

<sup>9</sup> A [February 2023 Washington Post article](#) on antisemitic acts in nearby school districts.

<sup>10</sup> A [report on Islamophobia in classrooms](#) from the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

<sup>11</sup> A [report on anti-Asian prejudice and hate crimes](#) from California State University’s Center on the Study of Hate and Extremism.





largely included in the draft as one in a long list of groups. The State Board urges OSSE to incorporate standards that acknowledge Latinx and Chicano history in its own right, in a way that ensures students can engage with the unique history and diversity of cultures under that larger umbrella. Over the past several years, Latinx people have been targeted by hateful political rhetoric and policies in the United States which has only fueled the discrimination that they often face.<sup>12</sup> Once again, the State Board must emphasize the social studies standards as one part of the way forward in combatting prejudice.

Along the same lines, the draft includes some standards about LGBTQ+ people and the role of sexuality and gender throughout history; however, when looked at together, the narrative they create about queer history is incomplete, repeating a few of the same moments and leaving others out altogether. In the draft, same-sex relationships and gender fluidity existed in some ancient civilizations, elements of queer culture emerged during the Black Renaissance, LGBTQ+ people were one of the many groups targeted by Nazis during World War II, the gay rights movement was one of many to emerge in the mid-1900s, and Obergefell v. Hodges is one of many landmark supreme court cases students should evaluate. As with the other groups mentioned previously, the LGBTQ+ community continues to face political and social prejudice; homophobic and transphobic bullying is common in schools and leads to queer students being more likely than their peers to experience feelings of sadness or hopelessness, poor mental health, and thoughts of suicide.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the SSSAC Guiding Principles which called for more representation of LGBTQ+ people, the State Board also passed [SR21-7 On LGBTQ+ Inclusive Standards](#) in October 2021 which resolved that “*upon the next revision of any District of Columbia state education standards, the State Board of Education should adapt standards, when appropriate, that reflect on the political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific contributions and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.*” While the State Board believes the standards currently included in the draft are a good start, they fall short of meaningfully incorporating queer history as a through-line, rather than as a few isolated moments.

**The State Board encourages OSSE and the TWC to seriously consider what narratives are being created by the standards about historically marginalized groups and whether those narratives help students appreciate the nuance of their history and culture or impart an incomplete understanding.** Students should be able to learn about people who are like themselves as well as those who are not. For that reason, the Guiding Principle “Creating ‘windows and mirrors’ for District students” emphasized “*the need for students to see themselves and people like them reflected in the content of standards and curriculum (mirrors), as well as having the opportunity to learn about diverse people, cultures, places, and experiences unlike themselves*”

<sup>12</sup> A [report on discrimination and the anxiety it has created in Latinos](#) from the Pew Research Center

<sup>13</sup> The sections titled “Focus Area: Experiencing Violence” (p. 44–56) and “Focus Area: Mental Health and Suicidality” (p. 57–70) in the [CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary and Trends Report, 2011–2021](#)





(*windows*)<sup>14</sup>” (p. 10). There are some draft standards, particularly in the earliest grades, that may help students learn about a range of identities and cultures from their peers, but that opportunity would not be evenly distributed throughout the city’s schools and should not be relied on to cover topics that are missing from elsewhere in the standards. While D.C. is a diverse city with many thriving ethnic communities—Salvadoran and Ethiopian, to name two—the city’s neighborhoods and schools are often notably homogenous.<sup>15</sup> The State Board urges OSSE to consider that some students may have limited opportunities outside of instruction to learn about the history and culture of people unlike themselves. **The standards should promise students access to the opportunity for both windows and mirrors.**

In order to evaluate how under-represented groups are included in the standards, the State Board suggests that OSSE return to the Guiding Principle on vertical alignment which called for standards that would “*minimize repetition of content over multiple years and maximize learning connections across grades*” (p. 3). By looking at the standards as a whole and the connections among grade levels, OSSE should be able to see where certain movements, people, and events in the history of under-represented groups are over-represented or missing.

***Clarity Around Economics and Financial Literacy***

The State Board has noticed a great reduction in standards coded as economics in the draft compared to the current standards from 2006.<sup>16</sup> As mentioned, there has been a reduction in the overall number of standards, but when considered proportionally the reduction in economics standards is evident as well. Though the State Board acknowledges that the current standards from 2006 often included more than one discipline while the draft released in December 2022 codes each standard under a single anchor standard, we do not believe that explains a more than 50 percent reduction in the share of standards relating to economics (See Figure 4). The State Board would appreciate an explanation of whether this was an intentional choice and, if so, what the reasoning was.

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<sup>14</sup> Footnote from the SSSAC Guiding Principles: “The concept of windows and mirrors is popularly used by Teaching Tolerance (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies/close-and-critical-reading/window-or-mirror>), but the phrase is attributed to scholar and award-winning children’s literature author Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop. (<https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>)” (p. 10).

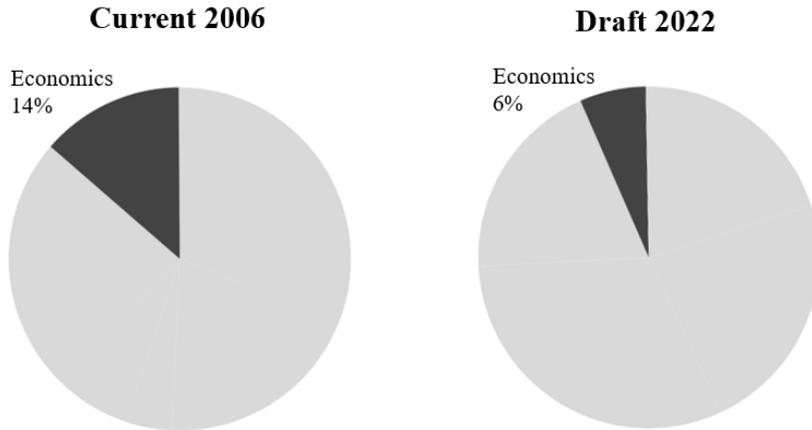
<sup>15</sup> A [report on D.C. school diversity](#) from the D.C. Policy Center.

<sup>16</sup> Discussion of the number of standards coded as economics from the current 2006 standards does not include standards from the economics elective course.





**Figure 4: Percent of All Social Studies Standards Coded Under Economics**



The fact that there are so few economics standards contributes to all four of the economics anchor standards sharing the aforementioned issue of not working together to fully address the knowledge and skills the anchor standards require. From kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, there are only 16 standards classified as “Economic Decision Making,” 13 standards under “Exchanges and Markets,” nine standards under “The United States Economy,” and eight standards under “The Global Economy.” The State Board does not believe that there must be the same number or proportion of economics standards in the draft as in the current 2006 standards; however, we do need there to be **a sufficient number of standards to ensure students can develop an adequate understanding of economic principles, how economic policies and industry have impacted the course of history, and how the economy affects people today.**

The State Board would also like to take this opportunity to seek clarity around the inclusion of standards around financial literacy. At this time, there are very few standards that could reasonably be classified as financial literacy standards. There is an anchor standard called “Economic Decision Making” which says that students will “*engage in economic decision making and evaluate the results of their choices;*” “*set goals, analyze the costs and benefits of various possibilities, and apply economic concepts to their own lives and to real-world problems;*” “*use data from charts, graphs, and economic models to ask questions, draw inferences, and construct conclusions;*” and “*analyze and propose solutions for the contemporary economic issues facing individuals, subpopulations, and society*” (p. 12). There are 16 standards under the “Economic Decision Making” anchor standard, but the ones that could be considered as standards on financial literacy and students making their own informed economic decisions are relegated to kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> These “Economic Decision Making” standards that fit within financial literacy education are: K.Econ.DM.23, K.Econ.DM.24, 1.Econ.DM.32, 1.Econ.DM.34, 1.Econ.DM.35, 8.Econ.DM.16, 8.Econ.DM.27, 8.Econ.DM.58, GC.Econ.DM.42, and DC.Econ.DM.40.





At the October 6, 2022, D.C. Council Committee of the Whole Hearing on [B24-81, Financial Literacy Education in Schools Amendment Act of 2023](#), Chairman Phil Mendelson asked OSSE whether financial literacy would be included in the new social studies standards. Assistant Superintendent Elizabeth Ross responded, “The draft standards do include, in the affirmative, economics and economic decision making.”<sup>18</sup> The State Board finds this comment confusing considering the very few standards in the draft on the topic of economics, economic decision-making, and financial literacy, so we would appreciate some clarification on if and how OSSE intends to include financial literacy in the social studies standards.

The State Board believes financial literacy education is important for the District’s students, but we also want to make sure that we are giving the topic the proper consideration and public engagement that it deserves. As former State Board President and Ward 6 Representative Jessica Sutter said during the Committee of the Whole Hearing on Financial Literacy Education, the State Board would “want to move as expeditiously as is appropriate while considering the many facets that go into actually implementing this requirement with fidelity in a way that serves our students.”<sup>19</sup> Essentially, we want to **ensure that the path forward on the social studies standards and financial literacy education is clear and that OSSE and the State Board are working from the same information.**

*Refine the Precision of Standards Language*

The State Board recommends that OSSE refine the precision of the language used in the standards to ensure that each one is assessable, clear about the content students are meant to analyze or evaluate, and coherent outside the context of the standards document.

For standards to be the most useful for educators, they must be outcome-oriented. At present, the language used in some of the standards pertains more to the action students will take in class rather than the content or skill they will eventually need to demonstrate on an assessment. Verbs like “examine,” “explore,” and “investigate” do not clarify for educators, LEA leaders, or curriculum writers what level of knowledge they should expect students to acquire during their exploration of the topic which will make it difficult to assess. Compare the draft standards in Table 13:

**Table 13: Comparing Process-Oriented and Outcome-Oriented Standards**

<b>Process-Oriented Standard</b>	<b>Outcome-Oriented Standard</b>
US2.Inq.DP.45 – “Explore the development of American culture during the 1930s and ‘40s, including music, art, literature, and goods.” (p. 136)	3.Geo.HC.39 – “Explain the history and legacy of cultural expressions that are unique to Washingtonians (e.g., go-go; Smithsonian Institution museums; embassies; status as the nation’s capital, etc.).” (p. 43)

<sup>18</sup> The exchange that includes this comment begins at 2:13:00 in the [hearing recording](#).

<sup>19</sup> The exchange that includes this comment begins at 2:04:00 in the [hearing recording](#).





US2.Inq.DP.45 does not make the outcome of instruction clear. Are students meant to explore the development of American culture in the 1930s and 1940s and just understand it? Are they meant to analyze the causes and effects of this new American culture? Are they supposed to evaluate whether this development of American culture meaningfully represented certain groups, whether it improved people’s lives, or based on some other metric? In contrast, 3.Geo.HC.39 is very clear about what students should be able to do at the conclusion of the lesson in which the standard is taught. On an exit ticket or a unit assessment, for example, the students will be able to explain the history and legacy of cultural expression unique to Washingtonians. **All the social studies standards should be written so they are similarly assessable.** When revising the draft, the State Board suggests that OSSE consider the ways the language of the standards can contribute to or detract from their usability.

The State Board previously noted that the draft uses significantly more higher-order verbs than the 2006 standards. However, there are some instances where a higher-order verb is used, but it does not make sense in the context of the rest of the standard, especially in the use of “assess,” “evaluate,” and other verbs on the fifth tier of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Verbs such as these call for students to make a judgment, interpretation, or defensible claim about the topic at hand, so standards that use those verbs should clearly be doing so. **For standards using verbs on the fifth tier of Bloom’s Taxonomy, including what metric students should evaluate or assess will make the standard much more coherent and usable for educators and curriculum writers.**

Compare the standards in Table 14 which include clear metrics for students to evaluate to the standards in Table 15 which don’t seem to actually intend for students to evaluate or assess as they are written.

**Table 14: Standards on Evaluation with Clear Metrics**

Standard Code	Standard Text	Page
K.Inq.DC.12	<i>Evaluate the utility of an artifact in responding to a question about the past or present.</i>	18
3.Hist.DHC.25	<i>Evaluate the cultural and civic impact of significant people and institutions that comprised the Black U Street community in the 1920s and 1930s.</i>	41
5.Geo.HE.13	<i>Evaluate the environmental impact that settler colonialism had on the Great Plains region, West Coast, and North and Southwest.</i>	56

**Table 15: Standards on Evaluation with Unclear Meaning**

Standard Code	Standard Text	Page
5.Geo.HC.18	<i>Evaluate how enslaved Africans practiced religion covertly through singing spirituals in the fields, gathering in hush harbors on Sundays for ring shouts, and fusions of Protestant Christianity and African-based spiritualities like vodoun and hoodoo.</i>	57





US2.Civ.WG.39	<i>Evaluate the reasons for the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe and the scapegoating of historically marginalized peoples (including Jewish, Romani, Slavic, disabled, and LGBTQ+ communities) by Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco.</i>	136
DC.Hist.HC.26	<i>Evaluate the roots and impact of cultural changes to Washington, DC in the 1970s.</i>	155

It is evident in the standards in Table 14 what criteria students will use in their evaluation of the historical content. Specifying students should judge the utility, cultural and civic impact, or environmental impact of the topic they’re studying will help teachers know what skills and background knowledge students will need and what they should eventually test students on. Other standards such as those in Table 15 are unclear about what students should be assessing. For example, in 5.Geo.HC.18, what metric should students use to evaluate the religious practices of enslaved Africans? What interpretation does US2.Civ.WG.39 expect students to be making about the reasons for the rise of fascism? In DC.Hist.HC.26, what about the roots and impact of these changes should students be judging? The State Board suggests that OSSE either change these verbs to ones that fit better within the standard (often ‘analyze’ would be more coherent) or revise the rest of the language in those standards to include more direction about what evaluations students are expected to make.

Finally, as written, many of the standards rely on their driving concept or nearby standards for context about the region, time period, and other necessary details, but that is not always the way they will be presented when taught. For example, educators are sometimes asked to post the standard for the lesson on a whiteboard, worksheet, or presentation slides so students can understand the learning outcome of the lesson. Therefore, the State Board recommends that OSSE **revise the language of standards to ensure that each is meaningful outside the context of the standards document**. See Table 16 for examples of standards that would be unclear outside the standards document and possible revisions.

**Table 16: Making Standards Work Outside the Context of the Document**

<b>Standard Code</b>	<b>Draft Standard Text</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Clarified Standard Text</b>
6.Geo.HP.30	<i>Assess the costs and benefits of changes in land use over time due to population distribution, natural resources, and human behavior.</i>	71	<i>Assess the costs and benefits of changes in land use <b>in Asia</b> over time due to population distribution, natural resources, and human behavior.</i>
6.Inq.TA.24	<i>Identify a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and assess individual and collective options for taking action to address challenges <b>in the</b></i>	70	<i>Identify a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and assess individual and collective options for taking action to address challenges <b>in Africa,</b></i>





	<i>region, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.</i>		<i>taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.</i>
WH1.Geo.HE.9	<i>Evaluate the effects of different approaches to gathering resources (foraging and farming) that emerged during this era.</i>	107	<i>Evaluate the effects of different approaches to gathering resources (foraging and farming) that emerged during the Mesolithic era.</i>

Overall, the State Board urges OSSE to ensure that the language of each standard is as clear and precise as possible. This will support educators, LEA leaders, and curriculum developers in providing high-quality instruction for students because they will be able to focus on their areas of expertise rather than figuring out what the standards mean.

**Conclusion**

The State Board thanks OSSE and the TWC again for their work on creating this draft of updated social studies standards. We see and appreciate the significant time and effort that has been spent in taking the existing social studies standards and revising them to fit the needs of the District’s current and future students. While there are changes that are still needed before the standards will fully align with the SSSAC Guiding Principles and be ready for approval, we are confident that we are moving in the right direction. We agree with OSSE’s previous statements that the District’s new social studies standards are important enough to take the time to get right.

At the same time, the State Board shares OSSE’s conviction that the implementation phase of the standards will be critical. Many LEAs will need to make substantial revisions or find replacements to their current curricula to align with the new standards. Particularly for smaller LEAs, this may be a significant challenge. Many educators will also be teaching courses they’ve never taught before and will require support to be ready for that task. We look forward to hearing more about OSSE’s plans for supporting the implementation of the standards and how the State Board can help in that endeavor.

Again, the State Board is excited to be able to fulfill our statutory duties and approve an updated set of social studies standards in the near future. We also look forward to continued partnership with OSSE on refining the new social studies standards and on reviewing and revising additional standards in the months and years to come. We would be happy to address any questions you may have about our comment letter.

Sincerely,

The D.C. State Board of Education





**Appendix 1: List of Figures and Tables**

*Figures*

**Figure 1:** Level of Thought Demanded by the Standards Per Grade (Current 2006)..... 3  
**Figure 2:** Level of Thought Demanded by the Standards Per Grade (Draft 2022)..... 3  
**Figure 3:** Standards Per Grade ..... 14  
**Figure 4:** Percent of All Social Studies Standards Coded Under Economics..... 24

*Tables*

**Table 1:** All Standards Under “The Global Economy” Anchor Standard ..... 9  
**Table 2:** Standards on Evaluating the Creditability of Online Sources ..... 11  
**Table 3:** Repetitive Standards on Geographic Features of the Thirteen Colonies ..... 12  
**Table 4:** Repetitive Standards on Comparing Media Sources on an Issue..... 12  
**Table 5:** Repetitive Standards on Maps of the D.C. Region Over Time ..... 12  
**Table 6:** Overly Broad Thematic Standards..... 14  
**Table 7:** Focused Thematic Standards ..... 15  
**Table 8:** Standards Requiring Specific Content Knowledge on U.S. History ..... 15  
**Table 9:** Standards Requiring Specific content Knowledge in World History II ..... 16  
**Table 10:** Standards on Culture Contributing to Broader Society ..... 19  
**Table 11:** Standards Addressing Judaism ..... 20  
**Table 12:** Standards Addressing Islam..... 20  
**Table 13:** Comparing Process-Oriented and Outcome-Oriented Standards ..... 25  
**Table 14:** Standards on Evaluation with Clear Metrics ..... 26  
**Table 15:** Standards on Evaluation with Unclear Meaning ..... 26  
**Table 16:** Making Standards Work Outside the Context of the Document ..... 27





## Appendix 2: Social Studies Standards Guiding Principles

1. Fewer, clearer, higher: Ensure content standards are rigorous
2. Content standards must be coherent, developmentally appropriate, and vertically aligned across grade levels Pre-K–12
3. Ensure comprehensive coverage of human rights principles
4. Use of active voice and precise language in revised standards
5. Arranging skills and content standards to ensure adequate attention to both
6. Knowledge framing: Anti-racist
7. Knowledge framing: Power and bias
8. Knowledge framing: Environmental literacy
9. Knowledge framing: Democratic citizenship, civic dispositions, and experiences
10. Knowledge framing: Global perspective
11. Skill: Student agency, participation, and voice
12. Skill: Digital literacy
13. Skill: Social Studies Standards should include skills that complement the English Language Arts (ELA) Standards
14. Recognition of currently under-represented groups
15. Incorporation of District history throughout Pre-K–12
16. Orientation towards “Hard History” in both U.S. and World History
17. Creating “windows and mirrors” for District students
18. Clarity and transparency in the “canon” included in the standards
19. Ensure inclusion of and clear labeling of disciplinary content in the social sciences





### Appendix 3: Public Comment to the D.C. State Board of Education

#### *Public Meeting Testimony*

1. Laura Engel, *Associate Professor of International Education at George Washington University* – December 21, 2022 [Written]
2. Adam Evans, *DCPS Social Studies Teacher* – December 21, 2022
3. Voncia Monchais, *Managing Director of Programs at Mikva Challenge DC* – December 21, 2022
4. Melanie Holmes, *DCPS Social Studies Teacher, SSSAC Member, and TWC Member* – January 18, 2023 [Written]
5. Laura Fuchs, *DCPS Social Studies Teacher and SSSAC Member* – January 18, 2023
6. Penelope Morris, *DCPS Student* – January 18, 2023
7. Chamiya Carnathan, *DCPS Student* – January 18, 2023
8. Sally Schwartz, *Director of Globalize DC and SSSAC Member* – January 18, 2023
9. Erich Martel, *Retired Social Studies Teacher* – January 18, 2023 [Written]
10. Jessica Giles, *Executive Director at Education Reform Now D.C.* – February 15, 2023
11. Scott Goldstein, *Executive Director at EmpowerEd* – February 15, 2023
12. Laura Fuchs, *DCPS Social Studies Teacher and SSSAC Member* – February 15, 2023
13. Erich Martel, *Retired Social Studies Teacher* – February 15, 2023
14. Tarek Maassarani, *Professor of Justice and Peace Studies at Georgetown University*– February 15, 2023 [Written]
15. Sally Schwartz, *Director of Globalize DC and SSSAC Member* – February 15, 2023 [Written]
16. Ruth Wattenberg, *Community Member and Former State Board Representative* – February 15, 2023 [Written]
17. Jessica Sutter, *Community Member and Former State Board Representative* – February 15, 2023 [Written]

#### *Additional Written Comments Received*

1. Shereen Bhalla, *Senior Director of Education, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Hindu American Foundation* – February 7, 2023



Written Testimony, Public Hearing, DC Social Studies Standards Review

December 21, 2022

Dr. Laura Engel, Associate Professor, The George Washington University

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the December 21, 2022 public hearing on the draft DC social studies standards review. My name is Laura Engel. I am an associate professor of international education and international affairs, and co-chair of the UNESCO Chair in International Education for Development at the George Washington University in Washington, DC. My research, teaching, and service focuses on globalization and education, including the incorporation of global perspectives in education.

I am delighted that the draft standards' are guided by the inclusion of a global perspective. We live in a world that is deeply interconnected and interdependent, marked by global and planetary challenges. Our local communities are not separate or isolated from global dynamics, evidenced by any range of issues -- whether the effects of climate change, increased cross-border migration adding considerable diversity to our DC communities, or destabilizing geo-politics that directly affect our local and national economies. It is essential to cultivate opportunities to embody our youngest citizens with the knowledge, dispositions, skills, and abilities to take action on such globally significant issues affecting all facets of our civic lives. Students need to be able to see how their lives, their communities, and their countries are interconnected with global dynamics, and to develop core global competencies of empathy, collaboration, recognition of diverse perspectives, and critical thinking rooted in scientific inquiry.

My testimony will focus on my review of the standards against the guiding principle's Knowledge Framing: Global Perspective, which states that "The revised D.C. Social Studies Standards should include an explicit, ongoing thread that provides students with a global perspective and global context for their own lives, their history, and their society; that equips students with the content knowledge, skills, experiences, and mindsets that will help prepare them for careers and engaged citizenship in a culturally diverse and globally interconnected world; that explores not just comparisons but connections between peoples of the United States and the rest of the world, historically and in the present." For my specific analysis of the standards against this objective, see Table 1.

Based on my review, I offer three recommendations on how to better align the standards to the guiding principle related to global perspective:

- 1) Create an on-going thread emphasizing a global perspective throughout the standards, starting in K-2 and carried through upper grades. Global perspectives are clearest and strongest in the upper grades;
- 2) Explicitly develop a definition of global mindset in the document, and review and revise the standards to better emphasize habits of mind for global civic engagement;
- 3) Emphasize local-global interconnectedness, including in all topics about identity, community, power, privilege, and positionality.

Thank you.

**Table 1: Review of draft standards against the guiding principle, Knowledge Framing: Global Perspective**

<b>Specific Components of Knowledge Framing: Global Perspective</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<p>Explicit, ongoing thread that provides a global perspective and global content for their own lives, their history, and their society</p>	<p>There is some evidence of an explicit global perspective, but an ongoing thread is less clear. “Global perspective” appears often as a level (e.g., local, national or global) or as a descriptor (e.g., global community, global interconnectedness). Global perspective appears strongest in relation to history, geography, and in driving concept 8. It appears weakest in relation to identity development, civic capacities, and in society. Overall, it seems like “globally” or “the global” is in opposition to local or national society and life. A specific example is standard 2.Inq.TA.34: “Identify a current question of sustainability and develop an action plan for increasing sustainability in your community or globally.” My recommendation is to revise this to: “Identify a current question of sustainability in your community that connects with other global communities. Develop an action plan for increasing sustainability in your local community, analyzing the connections between your community and global issues.” The standards need to be strengthened to emphasize the thread, to enrich the global perspectives as it relates to students’ lives, identity development, and contemporary society. The interconnectedness between local and global needs to be enriched throughout.</p>
<p>Equips students with the content knowledge, skills, experiences, and mindsets that will help prepare them for careers</p>	<p>Driving Concept 8 is evidence of this objective, particularly the specific mention of “consider ways to take action as a global citizen.” It would enhance all of the standards to build more of thread emphasizing local-global interconnectedness. For example, in 6.Inq.TA.77 on SDGs, revise to “Identify a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and assess individual and collective options for taking action to address challenges in local communities in connection to other communities around the world, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.” Overall there is not a major emphasis on the knowledge, skills, experiences, and mindsets most needed for career preparation. International organizations, including UNESCO, has guiding frameworks that may be referenced to define and detail these components.</p>
<p>Equips students with the content knowledge, skills, experiences, and mindsets that will help prepare them for engaged citizenship in a culturally diverse and globally interconnected world</p>	<p>There are opportunities to enrich the standards to more effectively meet this goal. Overall, Action Civics is strong, and could be incorporated appropriately into standards for younger grades. Driving Concept 5 and 6 each have a clear global perspective and importantly focuses on global social movements and action, locally, nationally, and globally. For example, WH2.Civ.CE.69 is particularly powerful. Any opportunity to strengthen the interconnections between these movements and civic action should be taken. In other places, there is no evidence of a global perspective. For example, Driving Concept 2</p>

	<p>How does the government function?, there is no mention of a global perspective.</p> <p>Overall the standards’ emphasize knowledge and skills toward engaged citizenship; however, experiences and mindsets are less clear. The word, mindset, never appears in the document. Habits of mind appears once (p. 5). How do these standards guide global mindsets? How do they guide global civic engagement? Any opportunity for connections between local, national, and global issues, ideas, movements, and action should be taken as a way of enhancing mindset for engaged citizenship.</p>
<p>Explores not just comparisons but connections between peoples of the United States and the rest of the world, historically and in the present</p>	<p>Overall, the standards emphasize more of a comparative perspective rather than one stressing interconnectedness. For example, 8.Civ.WG.1 is focused on evaluation and comparison of competing ideas for the purpose of government and the role of people across three different countries or Indigenous Nations. This is the only mention of a global perspective in Driving Concept 1 and it is rooted in comparison.</p> <p>Second, 8.1 states: “Throughout this driving concept, students should evaluate a specific public policy case, and create a proposal about the appropriate level of government intervention in the policy case they are studying.” This is a great opportunity to stress the global orientation as the policy case could be one that emphasizes global interconnection.</p> <p>Third, the standards related to Geography: The Diversity of Human Cultures emphasizes connections between diverse regions of the world and their contributions to global culture. However, global culture is not defined and it would be advised to instead use “global cultures.” How do global and regional cultures interconnect with the peoples of the United States? This should be a core question that is asked in review of these standards. It should not be framed in isolation.</p>

Good evening. My name is Adam Evans and I have served as a Social Studies teacher in DCPS since 2011 and elsewhere since 2008. My background is in both history and education. Since 2018, I have been teaching at Roosevelt High School in Petworth. I began with 11<sup>th</sup> Grade U.S. History, but decided to move to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade D.C. History and Principles of Government so that I could remain with my students during the virtual year.

I have been teaching the current Social Studies standards throughout my time in the District and have learned to embrace many of them, such as **Standard 12.DC.25.6** – *Identify the local professional sports teams that represent the nation’s capital.* As a new teacher in the District, this sort of standard was that delightful combination of fun and local culture that even a new resident could teach.

But then there were standards like **Standard 12.DC.17** – *Students identify key people who were civic and political leaders in Washington, DC, during the second half of the 20th century (e.g., Marion Barry, Ronald Blackburn-Moreno, Marvin Caplan, Nelson A. Castillo, Dave Clark, A. Powell Davies, Jane Delgado, Walter Fauntroy, Julius Hobson, E. Franklin Jackson, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, Janet Murguía, Eleanor Homes Norton, Delia Pompa, Joseph Rauh, Carlos Rosario, Polly Shackleton, Carl Shipley, Saul Solórzano, Sterling Tucker, Walter Washington, and John Wilson)*

When I was a new teacher, this list represented at least an afternoon of research to determine who each of these figures were – and then another process of determining the best pedagogical approach to get students to understand the significance of each. Do I teach them all with direct instruction? Do students each research one then share-out? Was it more important that they identify key leaders – or that they memorize the significance of each? This was true of many of the standards across the discipline. Though familiar with the practice of teaching and history, the standards were full of information that new teachers had to first learn, then prioritize on their own.

Luckily, I had the support of numerous people across DC Public Schools, from colleagues at other high schools to members of the Central Office staff. I was able to take advantage of summer programs like Teaching American History which gave me a depth of understanding of local history. Soon after, this led to summer work with curriculum development. We spent years developing a coherent curriculum

that included resources for teachers to be able to prioritize certain standards which were labeled “Power Standards.” These were the standards of most broad significance and those that allowed for students to explore the topics rather than simply memorize names, dates, and facts.

This shift was in keeping with inquiry-based social studies instruction and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework being adopted by the National Council for the Social Studies. Essentially, the discipline has been shifting away from learning information and more towards how to use that information to make informed decisions about history and society. Using my own career as an example, my first-year teaching, I used an overhead projector and told stories while students copied notes and asked questions. Now my instruction is an introduction to a topic, then students reading historic documents so they can address questions like:

- What’s more important, the rights of the individual or the protection of the group?
- How do people create positive lasting change within their communities?
- How do values change over time?

This reframing of Social Studies has allowed us to create instruction that helps students navigate an increasingly complex world, as well as practice the critical thinking skills necessary to consider multiple points of view and conflicting sources in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. These same changes have taken place in the revision of Social Studies standards in many states and in the College Board’s revisions of Advanced Placement tests in History and Government. Gone is the practice of memorizing each president and the significant developments during their presidencies. Now students are debating which evidence best supports, different historiographic viewpoints, analyzing data sets to make inferences from polls, and determining how best to engage in their local civic lives.

In DC, this is best embodied with organizations such as Mikva Challenge. Through their Action Civics curriculum, my students have presented plans for solving community issues to people of power in the District. For one project my students were writing a Student Bill of Rights. We were able to sit down with a Supreme Court Justice who was able to advise students and push them in the right direction.

The new standards represent a streamlined approach to Social Studies instruction that is among the best curriculum that can be offered to our students. Much of what remained useful within the previous standards is still there, but there has been a renewed sense of urgency for civic action and digital literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

As I consider standards and curriculum, I think about veteran teachers and the newest of teachers on their professional journey. These new standards represent the core of instruction that will allow teachers to adapt older resources and consider them in new light. For a new teacher, they represent a much more manageable core content that can refocus their instructional struggles from the content to skills and pedagogy.

From a student perspective, the standards allow for the pursuit of their own interests through an explicit focus on inquiry in addition to historical thinking and civic action. Recentring the content standards on the skills, with chances to practice those skills with new content each year will provide for a more coherent experience in Social Studies throughout their secondary education. It will also allow for a more explicit connections between the curriculum and their own lives and community. The curriculum is manageable in terms of depth, breadth, and organization.

As a veteran educator in Washington, DC, I encourage the adoption of these standards in order to push our students forward in terms of critical thinking, inquiry of the world around them, and action within their communities. Through the work of teachers, partner organizations, families, and the students themselves, these standards will enable a fresh lens for social studies instruction that will have real world benefits for our students and our community.

Testimony for feedback on the Social Studies Curriculum from Voncia Monchais, Managing Director of Programs at Mikva Challenge DC

- My name is Voncia Monchais and I am the Managing Director of Programs at Mikva Challenge DC - a civic engagement nonprofit that develops informed, empowered and active citizens with work we do in and outside of the classroom with middle and high school students and educators. I have been an educator in and out of the classroom for the last 17 years. I received my K-12 education in Texas and taught Government and African American History for 8 years in Miami, Florida before coming into the education non-profit space in DC for the last 9 years. Why does that matter? Because I come from a place where teaching half truths, erasing the honest blemished history in this country, avoiding courageous conversations on the difficult present, and excluding representation of many identities - was the norm. So I am passionate about changing that - and am grateful to be here to share my perspective on these new social studies standards.
- It is a travesty that education today on a national scale has become a political battlefield, and the people that are losing are our children. At a time when other districts and entire states - like Florida and Texas - are winding the clock backwards to teach history in half-truths, erasing or avoiding identities of students, eliminating civic education out of fear of a progressive wave, intentionally erasing representation, avoiding courageous conversations to avoid guilt of ONE population, promoting patriotism and ethnocentrism at the expense of truth, punishing teachers for teaching truths, and encouraging ignorance to maintain the status quo - DC has taken a bold and necessary stance with this new curriculum.
- Now, more than ever with youth mental health on the decline, feelings of helplessness increasing, low enrollment in schools increasing, and school violence at an all time high, students need to SEE themselves in the curriculum with all of their intersecting identities; students need to be in democratic classrooms and schools where their voice is centered, the space is safe and they can be authentically themselves; students need to learn relevant, real world, practical skills and lessons that they can use in LIFE (not just in college or career); students need to know how to understand and articulate what matters to them, and to have respectful discourse with people that have different perspectives; students need to know how and practice taking action to impact the world around them; students need to have some autonomy and exploration over what they learn so that it is engaging, satisfying, and relevant to what matters to them.
  - Discuss the top issue of the SVC survey - real world learning, lack of relevant skills, exploration and action civics -this does that!
- I am excited to say that I think that the new SS curriculum has the power and potential to address so many of these needs!
- The shift I am most excited about is the new 8th grade Action Civics course - especially through *access to power and protest and resistance!* (**Grade 8: From US History and Geography I: Growth and Conflict to Action Civics** - “Through each driving concept, students develop their own political consciousness and identity, understand their rights and responsibilities, and propose a plan for effecting change in their local and national communities. Students engage in inquiry-based learning to identify, understand, and respond to real-world issues from within their communities and take informed action beyond the classroom.” AND the ACTION Capstone projects that students in 12th grade will engage in with DC History (with the advocacy project) and Government (with the analysis of public policy). This is all PRACTICAL and real world learning that will teach, encourage and give students practice in being lifelong civic participants.

- Through Action Civics, students are learning to become lifelong civic participants and leaders - they are learning how to have an impact on the issues that matter to them, on the decisions that are going to directly affect them. At Mikva Challenge, we always say that youth are NOT apathetic or cynical in the way that so many stereotypes push; but rather, youth are simply uninvited to the decision making spaces.
  - \*This shift in the SS curriculum of including Action Civics in 8th grade, identity work, student voice and speaking out about the issues that matter to them is literally the district and schools inviting young people to the decision making table and teaching them to become lifelong civic participants.
  - \*This curriculum has the potential to be a model for other school districts across the country to get students in action, learning about themselves, seeing themselves in their learning, getting practical real world skills that will prepare them for life and not just for college or career but to be good, active citizens
  - With **identity exploration**, I think there is potential to see a positive impact on mental health because students - with their multi-dimensional identities - will see themselves included, celebrated, and understood and that helps to bring self worth.
  - *I would love to see this result in a formalized space that is shared with local decision makers and administrators - like an Action Civics Showcase - which Mikva Challenge has a blueprint of and would love to partner on!*
- With the **Inquiry Arc** - which Mikva Challenge has a perfect curriculum for called Project Soapbox that used to be a Cornerstone for seniors and should absolutely brought back for both 8th graders and seniors - this has incredible potential to teach students how to be more accepting and open to learn other perspectives and to have real civic discourse that doesn't result in the kind of ignorance and hateful speech and action that we are seeing in our political institutions and even communities today.
  - For fear of retaliation, disciplinary action, parent or administrative push back, so many teachers have understandably avoided discussing hot button political issues and current events that are most relevant and directly impacting students' lives. In places like Florida and Texas, where teachers are at risk of being filmed and fired for having students share their perspectives, and that is a travesty, because it is resulting in our students becoming ignorant teaches our students to be intolerant of other perspectives
  - There's power in students hearing Diversity of perspectives - learning to articulate their own ideas and respecting others - unlike our adult politicians
    - There is a NEED for teachers to have tools and strategies in being able to create the space and classroom culture to have these difficult conversations - not sure how that shows up in the curriculum
- Every year at Project Soapbox, AND in student testimonies in 2020 when you all asked for public input on new SS standards, one of the biggest issues that was shared was the white-washed history that has always been taught in schools and the lack of representation of our most marginalized communities in all history classes - including a robust black history - of both resistance (beyond the usual names), LGBTQIA history, women's/ feminist history (beyond suffrage), Latino history, Asian history, and religious history with a growing population of Muslims in the area and the increasing of anti-semitism. Additionally, in teaching world history, dont focus just on european history - but the royalty of African kings and queens and their contribution of so many firsts to the world, the birth of humanity out of ethiopia, Haitian Revolution. So the addition to “ **incorporate multiple historical perspectives and a global understanding of history**” is spot on to addressing these issues.

- At an unprecedented time of misinformation and dangerous media bias - which unfortunately corresponds with a digital age in which our youth are getting all of their news from social media and unchecked media outlets, it is crucial that media literacy is taught from an early age and then constantly. So the addition in the standards to teaching **media literacy as a key skill throughout each grade** is fantastic!
- In fleshing out the lessons and curriculum, make sure to tap into the multitude of organizations in this city that have this incredible work - including Mikva Challenge. We have an entire Action Civics curriculum that can be used for 8th grade and 12th, Project Soapbox that can be used for the Inquiry Arc, and a Media literacy curriculum - but so do other organizations so tap into this unique DC landscape that is saturated with organizations doing the work in an engaging way!
  - Similar to the newest initiative in NYC, Have Project Soapbox be a schoolwide showcase where administrators are required to listen to the students issues and solutions, and then bring those top speakers to a districtwide showcase with local decision makers who can actually implement citywide change.
- Suggestion during US History in discussing the treatment of indigeneous and African populations: A powerful but necessary opportunity is to use the word “genocide” to discuss the displacement and mass murder of both indigenous populations in the US and Africans during Transatlantic slavery. There also needs to be an emphasis on the history of the undocumented immigrant population, particularly from Latin America, since we have such large populations that are rising in DC and they need to see themselves valued in this curriculum.
- Anticipated change needed in the future: If the voting age lowers to 16 in DC, there will need to be a shift to potentially having DC History and Government in an earlier year, like Sophomore or Junior year so that students are equipped with the Civics knowledge to be knowledgeable voters
- Overall, this curriculum is on the right track and has the potential to be a model for other districts to follow! They key will be to get the right people (teachers, organizations) in the room to provide detailed curriculum and resources to support teachers in creating the kind of democratic, safe spaces in their classrooms to have these conversations and to have all the tools to teach this material responsibly. Mikva Challenge is happy and eager to partner and support with our Issues to Action and Project Soapbox Curriculum!

**State Board of Education Testimony**  
**Topic: Social Studies Standards Draft Feedback**  
**Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

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**Name/Contact Information:**

Melanie R. Holmes  
3641 Autumn Glen Circle  
Burtonsville, MD 20866  
(315) 383-5658, cell  
melaniereneeholmes@gmail.com

**Affiliations:**

- Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee
- District of Columbia Public Schools
- Howard University Graduate School, Department of History

**Testimony:**

My name is Melanie R. Holmes and I am a member of the Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee. Through SSSAC, I worked with a dynamic group of educators, community members, and students who all believe in the power and purpose of strong Social Studies content and instruction. Together, we formed the Guiding Principles, and I am very proud of the work we produced. In my mind, the Guiding Principles represent a list of nonnegotiable look-fors prescribed by SSSAC for the new standards. I personally believed that if the new standards were inspired by the Guiding Principles, it would revolutionize the way Social Studies is taught in Washington, DC.

However, my thoughts on the draft standards are not just based on my SSSAC contributions. I am a member of the Social Studies Standards Technical Writing Committee. On the SSSTWC, I co-led the new direction of the middle school Social Studies standards. I also collaborated with writers for the elementary and high school standards. We all worked long and hard. None of this has been easy, yet all of it has been worth the effort. Therefore, it is unfortunate that I must honestly say *I personally* do not feel the time and energy we put forth has been truly respected or valued by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

I have been in education for 15 years, starting my career as a licensed English/Language Arts teacher. I am now a licensed Social Studies teacher and have taught 6-10<sup>th</sup> grade history in District of Columbia Public Schools for eight years. I have been the Social Studies department chair in my school for five years. Further, I am defending my doctorate in the African Diaspora from Howard University this April. Many other members of the SSSTWC are highly and uniquely qualified to produce the work we did on the new standards. We were a “team of experts” prior to OSSE bringing in its own specialty group. Also, at least three other members of the writing committee are members of SSSAC. Therefore, I can confidently say that we meticulously adhered to the Guiding Principles.

To reiterate to the public, the standards that are currently under review are not the initial set of standards that were written. Per the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, our initial work was not “instructionally sound, historically complete, or factually accurate.” With minimal explanation or clarification provided, elementary standards writers were expected to go back to the drawing board and essentially start from scratch. Middle school and high school standards had some changes to make

as well, but they were less substantial as those of the elementary writing team. Personally speaking, as a SSSAC member on the TWC, I was proud of the original standards and felt they were ready for public review. As few things ever are, they were not perfect. However, I believe they were polished enough to be seen by the community. If OSSE is being honest, I think the real issue they had with those standards is that they were too progressive for DC politics. If we look around at our communities, though, progress is what we need.

The original standards produced were powerful and aligned from K-12, but I can speak most directly on kindergarten through eighth grade. Elementary students would learn literacy skills while gaining an understanding of social justice as it impacts the local, national, and global community. I appreciated and admired the elementary team for their commitment to exposing children to “hard history” which is one of the Guiding Principles. However, based on the little conversation I was able to have with OSSE, that is what put the initial elementary standards on pause.

Nonetheless, the elementary team persevered and came back with what is now under review. Their work is thorough, thoughtful, and exactly the content that DC’s children need as they grow and try to understand the complexities of their neighborhoods, city, country, and the world. It also prepares them for middle school content which, of course, continues the inclusion of literacy skills. For middle grades, though, I am most excited that the standards provide students with multiple opportunities not only to learn about Washington, DC, their country, and the world, but to explore and experience civic engagement.

The work of standards writing is like nothing else I have done, and I’m sure my TWC comrades would agree to that. But as a member of the SSSAC, I am thrilled that the vision of the Guiding Principles was fully embraced and actualized by my fellow writers. I believe the Social Studies curriculum that will inevitably come from the new standards can create “windows and mirrors” for students with the potential to build a more productive city and society. I can only hope this work is valued by the community.

## Testimony before the DC State Board of Education on State Board of Education on Social Studies Standards

By: Laura Fuchs

Given: January 18, 2023

Testimony is done in parts – I will likely return to expand on various pieces over the next few months. I focused almost exclusively on doing a deep dive in to World History II standards because I believe that is my area of expertise as well as a less “popular” area when compared with US History and Government.

- 1) Key Takeaways
- 2) Guiding Principles
- 3) Suggestions
- 4) Implementation & Timeline
- 5) Personal Qualifications

### 1) Key Takeaways

- **Guiding Principles** – Standards are the bare minimum that students have a right to learn. DC should ensure that students have the opportunity to learn about world history from a global perspective and in the modern era. The Draft World History II standards have almost zero historical content and have been moved to almost purely conceptual understandings. Furthermore, it is framed as the “West” (defined for this purpose as Europe and the United States of America) being the primary drivers of modern history and the rest of the world as reacting to them. This is the definition of white supremacy.
- **Implementation and Timeline** - The draft document does not take DC’s current racist implantation of the World History II standards into account and further opens the door to this kind of behavior. Allowing educators to freely pick and choose content to match the concepts. DCPS will not be able to update their curriculum and train their educators in time for the new standards to be rolled out in SY23-24. Therefore, we can and must push back their overly aggressive timeline to allow more input into the standards and opportunities to fix what is wrong.
- **Suggestions** - This is possible to fix, and some possible ideas could be easy to implement. But if it is not *significantly changed* it should **not** be passed as is. We do not need to rush and should do it right in case it takes a long time to update again.
- **Personal Qualifications** – My personal education and experiences make me expertly qualified to provide commentary on the World History II standards in particular.

### 2) Guiding Principles

- *Standards represent what students have a right to know and be taught.*  
The current standards have removed significant portions of content thereby removing students rights to learn said content. There are major historical events that would be incredibly hard to justify in depth teaching in their own right if one were to follow the

current standards with fidelity and hope to cover them – for example the Iranian Revolution, The Guatemalan Civil War and Genocide, the Indian/Pakistan split, Apartheid in South Africa and much more. Instead they would be looped into tiny chunks to be compared and only taught in reaction to European and American actions.

- *Students have a right to learn global historical content outside of a white supremacist framing and constant micro-comparisons to European/American actions.*

We should not be attempting to wholly make all social studies **content** standards flexible aka optional. Unfortunately, in the system of limited time and resources that we are in, too often something that is deemed “flexible” is something that gets cut, minimized or swept to the side for schools serving students with the greatest needs – especially East of the River. I applaud DC’s commitment to two years of World History at the high school level and think that it should be continued. For many of our students these two years will be the last that they spend on international studies and world history. We must give students as great an exposure to the world around them as possible in preparing them to be global citizens.

In attempting to balance depth over breadth, the current standards have actually increased the breadth and all but eliminated the ability to deep dive on anything except key European Historical Events. If you go through the current content standards they are all about Europe save for one optional reference to the Haitian Revolution. Examples of content not mentioned: Chinese Revolution, Iranian Revolution, El Salvadoran Civil War, Pinochet, Nelson Mandela and Apartheid, Ho Chi Minh, I could literally go on forever because the actual content could fit in one paragraph.

- *The standards should reflect our students and their history while exposing them to the broader world, global perspectives and the myriad of cultures that make up our world today.*

We should be looking at the world from the perspectives of people around the world. This is incredibly challenging due to resources and language barriers. But it *is* possible. This requires us to not frame everything as a reaction to “Major Events™” driven by “Westerns Powers” and instead to look deeper into countries and area studies to get to know the dynamics of those regions to *then* see how their history is much deeper than a pure reaction and to better understand their perspectives on how some of these major events affected the course of their lives.

We have to be incredibly intentional about what is and is not mentioned in our standards because the standards tell us and our students what is important:

What *is* mentioned is the Holocaust. I am Jewish and much of my extended family was murdered in the Holocaust. But why is the Holocaust and Anti-semitism explicitly listed and the Rwandan Genocide and Islamophobia are not?

What *is* mentioned is the Russian Revolution. Again, super important and something that I enjoy teaching very much, but why mention that revolution explicitly mentioned and not those in other nations that also changed the world such as those in China and Iran.

What *is* mentioned is World Wars I and II in comparative detail and then all the other *continents* are listed as how were they affected by it.

What *is* mentioned is a list of “enlightenment” philosophers, what is not mentioned are ANY OTHER PHILOSOPHIES AND THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THEM AT ALL.

There is also ZERO content provided from more recent time periods. Updating standards was an opportunity to bring in more recent historical events such as the Syrian Civil War and Refugee Crisis, the Arab Spring, China and today’s global economy, and so much more.

### 3) Suggestions

- *The number of conceptual standards needs to be significantly reduced and replaced with historical, geographic and cultural content.*

While there are fewer standards if you count them. The standards that are included are so massive and cover so much potential content that they actually don’t reduce the overall amount of material that would arguably need to be covered in order to complete the standards in a satisfactory manner.

Because the standards are almost all conceptual in nature, they also make the course very hard to organize. If someone were to do the standards as written they would lead to endless comparisons and small chunks about each country, largely in reference to Western-centric framing.

This can be fixed by choosing **2-3 major** concepts per unit at the maximum and then adding back in the required and/or potential content that would go into teaching those concepts.

- *Historical content needs to be added to every single concept that remains in the standards.*

The 2006 standards are not written in a way that incorporates higher order thinking skills, but they are not wholly white-washed and should be examined carefully because there are some interesting connections to DC and more that are unique and worth keeping. I learned a lot my first few years in DC just from reading the standards and realizing I had not been taught all of this in the International Baccalaureate curriculum I studied growing up. While it is not really possible to go deep on every single standard that is included, it provides a large menu of what we could be covering.

Our existing standards could be added to some of the existing (and significantly pared down) conceptual standards as examples (some required, some optional) to provide clear direction and learning opportunities.

Sample Newly Drafted Standard:

WH2.Civ.WG.52 Evaluate the effectiveness of revolutionary leaders and movements in achieving autonomy, social justice, or sovereignty in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Suggestion addition pulled from 2006 World History II Standards:

**Utilize 1 of the following examples from each region.**

*Africa*

10.11.3 Explain the Pan-Africanism movement, the formation of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), and various independence movements (e.g., Congo conflict and Patrice Lumumba; struggle over Angola and Mozambique; and the Zimbabwe War of Independence) and African American support (e.g., the Council on African Affairs and the African Liberation Support Committee). (P, S)

10.11.5 Explain the fight against and dismantling of the apartheid system in South Africa and evolution from white minority government, including the role of Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress, and the role of African Americans, such as Randall Robinson, and the TransAfrica in ending apartheid. (P, S)

*Asia*

10.12.1 Analyze the Chinese Civil War, the rise of Mao Zedong, and the triumph of the Communist Revolution in China. (P, M)

10.12.5 Explain the historical factors that created a stable democratic government in India and the role of Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indira Gandhi in its development. (P)

*Latin America*

10.14.2 Explain the struggle for economic autonomy, political sovereignty, and social justice that led to revolutions in Guatemala, Cuba, and Nicaragua and armed insurgencies and civil war in many parts of Central America. (P, M)

10.14. 3. Describe Cuba as a theater of the Cold War, including the role of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Missile Crisis. (G, P, M)

10.14.9. Describe the return to populism and socialism in Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. (P)

*Middle East*

10.15.4 Explain the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 after Khomeini

10.15.5 Trace the defeat of the Soviet Union and the rise of the Mujahideen and the Taliban in Afghanistan. (P, M)

10.15.6. Trace the origins of the Persian Gulf War and the postwar actions of Saddam Hussein. (P, M)

- *Different frameworks and structures must be allowed beyond a Western chronological framing (i.e., area studies style, thematic, etc.)*

It should be possible to maneuver the standards so that the content can be taught in different ways. I personally prefer an “area studies” type model that allows me to dive deep into different regions of the world and allow students to get the regional context, culture, and history. It also allows us to revisit the larger timeline, make the *occasional* comparisons and dive deeper into select countries. Other educators may prefer to do it differently.

No matter what, the framework should not emphasize that Europe/America are “drivers” of modern world history and that the world is just sitting around waiting to react and be affected by it.

- *Non-Western/European/American content must be emphasized and hold a higher percentage of the overall course.*

We can stand to wait and make sure that the standards are significantly improved. I am concerned that while teachers could "choose" to cover certain regions of the world, it is entirely possible to teach this course without diving deeply into particular regions.

I see that the Middle East is not explicitly highlighted (but the Caribbean Islands are) and countries such as Iran are completely omitted as examples which means it is possible to teach this course without mentioning the Iranian Revolution - in fact it seems hard to teach the Iranian Revolution using these standards. There are FAR too many standards on World War I explicitly and not nearly enough on other regions issues. This continues to perpetuate a European lens through which we are almost forced to teach World History II.

Another glaring omission is the split between India and Pakistan. The fact that it isn't mentioned anywhere as even a potential example is a huge problem and a slap in the face to some of the driving historical events that likely will only be covered in a World History Class. Instead too much time is once again given to issues that will be covered in US History. Again, perpetuating a Western perspective on the modern era.

This is fully apparent with the omission of the Chinese Revolutions of the 20th century. How can we teach World History and ignore this entire region explicitl. It would be possible for a teacher to teach the entire course and never mention it. This is not acceptable.

One area that is sorely lacking in the 2006 standards is Latin American and Caribbean history in World History II. As a teacher in this content area, and someone who wrote their graduate thesis on Truth Commissions in Guatemala, this is both personal and professional for me. The history is incredibly important to understanding the world and directly touches on students in our classroom. It is important that this content not get left out and only addressed in the new standards by mention of continents.

I am highly disappointed in how these standards are still perpetuating a racist and white supremacist world view and pushing a teaching of world history that is entirely centered on the Western perspective. This would be easy to fix with explicit references to more examples of non-western events which are largely left out. It demonstrates a limited understanding of WORLD history and shows the bias of the creators. I am saddened but not surprised that I will have to continue to push for a truly world history oriented content out of this mess.

#### **4) Implementation and Timeline**

I came to DCPS in 2007 and the new standards had just been passed. Michelle Rhee had just taken over the District and her understanding of what was going on was limited (at best), and social studies was not something she was focused on. Courses were completely changed and the teachers who had been teaching a long time were just starting to learn what those standards were. I saw what a poor and hasty roll out of standards could do. Some teachers just taught things the way they had (couldn't blame them, when would they have learned the new standards?). There were literally zero materials we could share and use from the system. Everything had to be created ourselves. There was no clear scope and sequence. It was a free for all. While I personally relished that and enjoyed diving into content, I know that it took me several years to get even a course structure I wanted to continue using and building up my pedagogical and content strategies as I went. And I know for too many the course was almost strictly Western Civilizations and the rest was limited at best if taught at all. And again, who could blame them, the textbook we have used (hasn't changed since I got here, no idea when it was adopted) is so surface level as to be the most boring whitewashed rendition of history I've ever seen so everything we use has to be found ourselves.

The current standards do not need to go down this same path. Even if we "pass" them quickly DCPS won't have the time to create high quality materials for PK-12, let alone roll them out to educators in a way that we could meaningfully engage with them. If we roll them out hastily then we will see educators do what they can to scramble and this will result in the status quo reigning on, if not be made significantly worse.

#### **5) Personal Qualifications**

I don't normally go into detail on my own personal education background, but I think it lends some understanding of where I am coming from when I say that the social studies standards *cannot* be passed as written.

I am a Ward 5 resident, DC Public School Social Studies Teacher since 2007, and have taught every single required social studies course as well as many different electives. The courses I have taught for the longest amounts of time (over a decade at this point) are World History II and AP US Government. I am an executive board member of the Washington Teachers Union and Empower DC, which means I hear from people across the District as part of my regular work. I am also a former member on the DC State Board of Education's Credit Flexibility Task Force in 2017 and served on the DC SBOE Social Studies Principles Committee.

My undergraduate degree is in Political Science with Honors from the University of Chicago and I focused primarily on international studies, history and government with a human rights concentration. My honors thesis was on the effectiveness of Truth Commissions, focusing on the one conducted in Guatemala after the American funded genocide of the Mayan people. I have a MAT in Teaching Secondary Social Studies from American University (2009) as well as a Specialist Degree in K-12 Public Education Leadership from George Washington University (2013). My experiences abroad have been varied and not as extensive as I would like. I studied abroad in South Africa during undergrad as well as did a 4-month internship in Guatemala. More recently I traveled for a month through the Fund for Teachers program to Vietnam to improve my understanding and teaching of Vietnam in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. All of these experiences have greatly informed my personal understanding and desire to teach World History from a global perspective instead of a "Western" / white supremacist perspective. I have continued my education here at home over the years as well taking courses almost every single year to improve my understanding of various global regions (Georgetown Middle East Institute, China Institute, etc.) and the US Government (James Madison's We The People, National Archives, etc.), as those are the two courses that I have taught the most frequently.

**DC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Monthly Meeting  
Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

**Testimony Presented by:  
Penelope Morris  
Japanese Plus Student**

Good afternoon. My name is Penelope Morris, and I am an 11th grader at School Without Walls High School. We are from Japanese Plus, a Japanese language, culture, and career exposure program for DC teens, and today we would like to talk about how the District can combat anti-Asian and Asian American hate through education. During the pandemic, as we've all seen, there has been a dramatic rise in hate crimes against Asians and Asian Americans, and as students of Japanese language and culture, and Asian language and culture in general, we feel that it's important for us to make our voices heard in the fight against AAPI hate.

In 2021, when the DC social studies standards first went up for public comment, we testified before you to demand that the standards be more inclusive of Asians and Asian Americans. We determined that the standards needed to include more AAPI and Asian culture, start introducing AAPI content in earlier grades, and include plans for directly exposing students to AAPI people and culture through programs like field trips.

However, in looking over the newest draft of the standards, we've realized that none of our recommendations were followed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and in many ways the standards have regressed in their inclusion of Asians and Asian Americans. Today my colleague and I would like to present several complaints regarding the changes to the standards as they relate to the inclusion of Asians and Asian Americans.

**Needs more culture:**

The first observation we would like to share is the lack of standards that mention Asian and AAPI culture, especially in the early grades. Asia is explicitly mentioned for the first time in the second grade standards, and the few standards that explicitly mention Asia are extremely political. Not enough time is spent on other aspects of Asian societies. When Asian culture is mentioned, the standards are incredibly vague, such as in World History 1 Standard 33, which asks students to analyze the role of culture in

Asian government. None of these standards go into depth enough to ensure that students receive a thorough education in important aspects of Asian and AAPI culture such as language, societal values, and the arts, but if students were exposed to Asian and AAPI culture more often and from an earlier age, they would better understand the diversity of their communities.

**Needs more countries:**

In a similar vein, the standards focus mostly on China, India, and Japan, with a few mentions of Korea. This neglects the vast variety of Asian and AAPI cultures and histories that have developed on the continent and contributes to the stereotype that Asian cultures are a monolith. Therefore, we recommend that the standards include more specific, explicit examples of a range of countries in order to better support the concepts that students learn. For example, in World History I Standard 23, students are expected to compare the rise of empires across the globe, but instead of solely examining China, as many curricula do, the Mongol Empire and Taiwan could be used as examples of this concept. If students learn more about individual Asian countries, they will better understand the diversity of Asian and Asian American cultures and will therefore be better informed and aware about the cultures of Asian community members, which is an essential first step toward reducing anti-Asian hate.

**DC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Monthly Meeting  
Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

**Testimony Presented by:  
Chamiya Carnathan, Japanese Plus**

Hi, I'm Chamiya Carnathan, also a student at School Without Walls

**Needs to be more specific:**

To compare the revised standards and the older version, there is even less specific information now on Asia and Asians. For example, the older version covered the history of Southeast Asia, including Southeast Asia's involvement in wars. The standards also included the perspectives of Asians and named individuals such as Emperor Hirohito. But the revised standards do not include details of Asia. In another example, the older version of the standards for World History I detail the Tang Dynasty's reunification of China and the causes for the growth of Buddhism in Tang China, Korea, and Japan. However, in the updated version, standard 22 reads: "Compare and contrast tenets of various belief systems that developed in ancient empires and how they spread, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism." There are many standards like this that broadly include all continents. There was more specificity in the older version. Also, there is less specificity regarding Asia since the World History II standards barely mentioned Asia's involvement in World War II and did not offer specific names and events. Look at standard 42: "Analyze the causes and events of World War II in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas."

**Needs to be less Eurocentric:**

The standards mainly focused on the West's influence across the world including Asia. In World History II, standard 5 states, "Explain the historical context of 'Eurocentrism' and the lasting social, political, and economic impacts on countries ... in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean and our understanding of sources from the past." The rest of the standards for World History II are to evaluate, explain, and assess European political, cultural, social, and economical influence on Asia and other countries. These standards do not represent Asia as a continent with its own history but rather a continent that has thrived or suffered because of Europe.

**Needs more direct exposure to Asian/AAPI people, communities, and stories:**

We suggested that the revised standards should go beyond the focus on wars, governments, and political leaders of the past to actually expose DC students to Asians/AAPI people in communities today. But, there are no mentions of these kind of standards like the older version. For example, in the older version, Grade 3 standards stated that local major monuments and historical sites should be recognized, such as the Vietnam Veterans and Iwo Jima Memorials, as well as discussing the various communities in DC, such as Chinatown. But, the only specific new standard that mentioned different communities was standard 33 in DC History and Government, which mentions Chinatown as an option. We asked for more exposure to Asian Americans/AAPI and OSSE has not listened to us.

**Needs to be more Asia/AAPI content in earlier grades:**

Our first recommendation was to see Asia and Asian Americans included from the earliest grades. We believe that showing films and reading books with Asian/AAPI representation at young ages will help dispel or prevent stereotypes. What we've found with the new standards is no explicit Asia/AAPI content until some ancient Chinese history in grade 2 and some American history standards in grade 5. This is not enough.

## **Globalize DC -Japanese Tamago #Stop Asian Hate Project RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DC SCHOOLS**

As students and consumers of Japanese/Asian culture, we feel it is important to step up and take a stand against AAPI hate. Compared to other places in the US (such as DC's suburbs, New York City, and the West Coast), Asian Americans are not a large community in DC (4.6%) or in DC public schools (2%). That's why we believe it's especially important for allies to the Asian American community to be active and vocal in DC.

### **After much discussion, we concluded that EDUCATION IS KEY.**

If bullies understand the history of Asian Americans and know the realities of these communities, then they will be less likely to act out in negative ways. Contextualization is important. If people are exposed to Asian and Asian American people and culture, we think they might not be so hateful. We believe education is an important first step for anyone wishing to be allies for the AAPI communities in this difficult time.

That's why our first step as Japanese Tamago is to begin a process of self-education, with plans for ongoing educational programs for ourselves and other interested persons, using webinars, podcasts, and social media.

### **Here are our recommendations for DC schools:**

#### **Improve the curriculum PK-12**

We have reviewed the current social studies standards to identify places where Asia and Asian Americans are taught or could be taught. Here are our recommendations for better ways to teach about Asia and Asian Americans in DC schools.

- We want to see Asia and Asian Americans included from the earliest grades. We believe showing films and reading books with Asian and Asian American representation at young ages will help dispel or prevent stereotypes.
- We recommend social studies classes, especially in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade (World Geography and Cultures), include more information on different ethnic groups, cultures, religion, and mythology to increase our knowledge beyond Western culture, religion, and mythology.
- We want the curriculum to move beyond the current focus on wars, governments, and political leaders. We don't want to only learn about the negative aspects of history, such as wars.
- We want to learn about places for their own sake and not just as reflections of US history.
- We want to learn about connections and comparisons between people, cultures, and nations – not just as separate units of study.
- We want students to expand their understanding of Asia beyond "Chinese Dynasties and Japan" to be more inclusive of South, Southeast, and Western Asian history and current events.
- We can also learn about Asia, Asian culture, and Asian Americans in other subject areas, such as English Language Arts, Humanities, World Languages, and so on.
- Reading books about the Asian American experience, as well as watching and discussing films with more accurate representations, are also valuable educational strategies.
- The goals should not only be to increase knowledge and understanding, but also to build empathy and connections.

**In addition, we recommend the following:**

**Field trips**

Students always enjoy field trips. They should be able to visit Asian/Asian American landmarks, businesses, galleries, neighborhoods (like Chinatown), etc, even beyond the borders of DC.

**Afterschool culture clubs**

We believe that students should have more afterschool opportunities to learn about different cultures, including Asian cultures. Students and educators should create culture clubs where world cultures can be explored and appreciated, even for those parts of the world not represented within the school's own student population (in other words, learning about Asian cultures is not just for Asian American students). These culture clubs would also be able to learn about current issues within different communities, such as the surge in anti-Asian hate. Student clubs like this can take the lead in implementing some of the other ideas presented here.

**Culture fairs/events – opportunities to hear AAPI voices**

We're not only thinking of displays or demonstrations of Asian culture, but with Asian and Asian American speakers sharing their voices and experiences, defying stereotypical media portrayals, with discussions and other opportunities to interact with students and others. These events could take place at schools, as well as in other community settings.

**Exchanges with nearby schools in the DMV with Asian and Asian American students**

These student exchanges would be very beneficial in increasing understanding and challenging stereotypes. We should start with students at young ages.

**Hire more Asian and Asian American teachers**

DC schools should hire not just native-born Asian (Chinese) teachers for language classrooms, but more Asian Americans for any purpose.

**Better anti-bullying or anti-racism training for counselors and students**

Students are Impressionable, and often will follow others, even when the best decisions aren't being made. A number of students in our group feel that anti-bullying advice to students is quite insufficient at present. Parents also have a role in discouraging bullying or hate against the AAPI community and others. Parents need to talk to their children. Parents can sometimes be the problem, and in that case, they need to also receive trainings.

**Monitor current events at school**

Students should have an opportunity to learn about, discuss, and reflect on current issues and news at school. This can be done within advisories, and in other creative ways.

**Do a better job with AAPI Heritage Month**

Many of us noted that the official email from DCPS on AAPIH Month just came out at the end of May. Even though we believe learning about Asia and Asian Americans should take place all year long, we think May is an opportunity to do much more, especially at a time of crisis like the present. Among other ideas, students could be encouraged to donate to identified organizations that are providing support to the AAPI community.

June 2, 2021. Email [sally@globalizedc.org](mailto:sally@globalizedc.org) for further information.

**Draft Social Studies Standards that mention Asia, Asians, or Asian Americans  
Released 12/16/22**

***Kindergarten: Myself and My Community***

None

***Grade 1: Working and Building Together***

None

***Grade 2: This Wide World***

**2.Geo.GR.23** Using maps and other resources, locate and identify key geographic characteristics of Central America, and South America, **ancient China**, ancient Rome, and Aksum (e.g., bodies of water, landforms, climate, etc.).

**2.Econ.EM.25** Examine the crops grown in ancient civilizations across the Americas, Rome, **ancient China** and Aksum.

**2.Hist.DHC.26** Compare the various physical structures constructed across the Americas, Rome, **ancient China** and Aksum, and investigate the purposes of these structures (i.e., temples, pyramids, walls, etc.).

**2.Hist.DHC.27** Identify and describe the scientific and technological innovations across the Americas, as well as across Rome, Aksum or **ancient China** (i.e., number systems, aqueducts, etc.).

**2.Hist.CCC.28** Describe governing and social structures developed in the Americas, as well as across Rome, Aksum or **ancient China**, including the kinds of governments and gender roles; including female-led kingdoms and matriarchal societies.

***Grade 3: Geography, History, and Cultures of DC***

None

***Grade 4: American Foundations-First Nations through the Founding of the US***

None

***Grade 5: Foundations of Modern of America***

**5.Inq.DP.5** Evaluate historical perspectives about US imperial expansion including Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism from multiple perspectives including Indigenous Nations, countries and peoples in the Pacific, Caribbean, **Asia** and Americas.

**5.Inq.DP.12** Identify and describe the lived experiences of people who came to the West, especially **Chinese**, Irish, and African Americans, as well as their motivations for movement and their experiences upon arrival.

**5.Inq.DC.38** Explain how white supremacist groups founded in the aftermath of emancipation such as the Ku Klux Klan enacted terror against Black people but also against Jewish, Latinx, and **Asian American** communities.

**5.Hist.HC.42** Describe the causes and consequences of major events of World War II including Pearl Harbor, D-Day and the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.

**5.Inq.ID.44** Using primary sources from the perspective of American citizens of Japanese descent, analyze the struggles and resistance of those who were incarcerated during World War II.

**5.Inq.DP.45** Compare the different experiences of servicemembers when they returned to the United States after the war, including white, Black, Latinx, Indigenous and Asian American servicemen.

**5.Hist.CCC.51** Explore the efforts and impact of diverse groups and organizations inspired by the African American Civil Rights movement to address inequalities in American society, including but not limited to: the gay rights movement, the Stonewall Uprising, the American Indian Movement (AIM), the United Farm Workers, the Women's Liberation Movement, the Asian American Movement, disability rights movement, Chicano Movement and Latinx resistance.

### **Grade 6: World Geography**

#### **Driving Concept 3: Asia**

*In this driving concept, students continue their regional studies through the geography of Asia, with an emphasis on regional diversity. Utilizing a variety of maps, students investigate the role of different regions of Asia in global economics and history, as well as contextualize contemporary issues within the region. It is recommended that teachers use a case study approach during this driving concept.*

**6.Inq.DQ.25** Analyze different geographic representations of Asia, created by different groups of people over time to support claims about Asian history and geography.

**6.Geo.GR.26** Analyze maps of Asia that represent a variety of environmental (landforms, bodies of water, natural resources) and cultural (languages, borders, religions, etc.) characteristics to assess spatial patterns on the continent.

**6.Geo.GR.27** Use physical, cultural, and economic maps to draw regions on the Asian continent and compare these to the existing regional economic communities.

**6.Hist.CCC.28** Use primary and secondary sources to evaluate the historic and contemporary role of Indigenous people in the development of Asia.

**6.Geo.GI.29** Evaluate the reasons for patterns of conflict and cooperation between the people of Asia and people from other regions.

**6.Geo.HP.30** Assess the costs and benefits of changes in land use over time due to population distribution, natural resources, and human behavior.

**6.Geo.HE.31** Assess how the environmental characteristics of Asia influenced the economic development of different regions within Asia and the region's role in global trade patterns over time.

**6.Geo.HE.32** Examine the impact of climate change on people in different regions within Asia.

**6.Geo.HP.33** Assess the political, economic, and social impact of migration of people within, from, and to regions of **Asia** over time.

**6.Geo.HP.34** Explain how changes in transportation and communication technology have influenced the connections between people and affected the spread of ideas and cultural practices within Asia and between **Asia** and other regions.

**6.Geo.HP.35** Analyze **Asian** cultural contributions to global culture, including art, literature, music, dance, cuisine, philosophy, religious or political thought.

**6.Inq.TA.36** Identify a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and assess individual and collective options for taking action to address challenges in the region, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.

### ***Driving Concept 7: Oceania***

*In this driving concept, students analyze the geography of Oceania, and the political, economic, social, and cultural impact of geography on the people and history of the region. Utilizing a variety of maps, students investigate the role of Oceania in global economics and history, as well as contextualize contemporary issues within the region. It is recommended that teachers use a case study approach during this driving concept.*

**6.Inq.DQ.63** Analyze different geographic representations of **Oceania**, created by different groups of people over time to support claims about the history and geography of **Oceania**.

**6.Geo.GR.64** Analyze maps of **Oceania** that represent a variety of environmental (landforms, bodies of water, natural resources) and cultural characteristics (languages, borders, religions, etc.) to assess spatial patterns that make up the continent.

**6.Geo.GR.65** Use physical, cultural, and economic maps to draw regions on **Oceania** and compare these to the existing region's economic communities.

**6.Hist.DHC.66** Use primary and secondary sources to evaluate the role of Indigenous people in the development of **Oceania**.

**6.Geo.GR.67** Examine the impact of climate change on people in different regions within **Oceania**.

**6.Geo.HP.68** Analyze maps to trace the migration of people within, from, and to **Oceania** over time, and assess the impact of migration on the region, with specific attention to the role of climate change on migration from **Oceania**.

**6.Geo.HP.69** Explain how changes in transportation and communication technology influence the connections between people and affect the spread of ideas and cultural practices within **Oceania** and between **Oceania** and other regions.

**6.Inq.TA.70** Identify a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and assess individual and collective options for taking action to address challenges in the region, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.

### **Grade 7: US History I**

**7.Hist.HC.53** Evaluate the reasons for **Chinese** immigration to the United States, including immigration policy, and the political, social and economic opportunities and challenges different individuals face in the United States.

### **Grade 8: Action Civics**

None

### **World History I:**

**WH1.Hist.HC.17** Explain how the development of cities in Africa, **Asia**, Europe and the Americas led to common characteristics of early complex societies including social hierarchies, governments and laws, specialization, and writing.

**WH1.Geo.HC.18** Analyze how early belief systems shaped the political, legal, economic, and social structure of states in Africa, **Asia**, and the Americas.

**WH1.Geo.HC.19** Analyze the origins, beliefs, traditions, customs, and spread of **Hinduism** and Judaism.

**WH1.Hist.DHC.20** Compare and contrast the decline of complex agrarian societies in **Asia**, Africa, and the Americas.

**WH1.Geo.HC.22** Compare and contrast the tenets of various belief systems that developed in ancient empires and how they spread, including Christianity, Islam, **Buddhism and Confucianism**.

**WH1.Hist.DHC.23** Compare the emergence of empires across Africa, **Asia**, Europe, and the Americas including their methods of consolidating and maintaining power.

**WH1.Civ.WG.24** Analyze the ways in which ancient empires in Africa, **Asia**, Europe, and the Americas, were governed, including decision-making, means of promoting the common good, and the relationship between people and their government.

**WH1.Hist.DHC.25** Assess the importance and enduring legacy of major governmental, technological, and cultural achievements of ancient empires in Europe, **Asia**, the Americas, and Africa.

**WH1.Geo.HC.26** Compare and contrast social hierarchies of ancient empires in Africa, **Asia**, Europe, and the Americas and the ideologies that guided them.

**WH1.Econ.EM.27** Analyze the emergence of complex, interregional networks of trade throughout **Afro-Eurasia** and how trade networks led to the diffusion and evolution of ideas, resources, and technologies.

**WH1.Hist.CCC.31** Analyze the political changes and continuities in the societies and dynasties that emerged after the decline of ancient empires in Africa, **Asia**, Europe, and the Americas.

**WH1.Geo.HC.33** Analyze the role of religion, belief systems, and culture in the governance and maintenance of societies in Africa, **Asia**, and Europe.

**WH1.Geo.HE.34** Explain the ways geography influenced the development of economic, political, and cultural centers in Africa, **Asia**, the Americas, and Europe and how the centers facilitated cultural diffusion.

**WH1.Geo.GI.36** Evaluate the economic, political, cultural, and social impacts of cultural diffusion in Africa, **Asia**, the Americas, and Europe due to trade, religious expansion, and migration.

**WH1.Hist.HC.37** Evaluate the impact of intellectual and technological innovations from **Asia** on the development of societies in Africa and Europe.

**WH1.Hist.HC.39** Analyze the factors that contributed to the expansion and/or emergence of powerful nation-states and empires in **Asia**, Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

**WH1.Civ.LP.40** Compare and contrast the methods rulers used to legitimize and consolidate power within **Asia**, Europe, Africa, and the Americas, including bureaucracies, militarism, feudalism, architecture, taxation, and art.

**WH1.Geo.GI.41** Analyze the impact of centralizing power on both trade and conflict between and within states and empires in **Asia**, Europe, Africa and the Americas.

**WH1.Geo.HC.42** Compare and contrast how states and empires in **Asia** and Europe addressed issues of cultural diversity and conflict within their societies.

**WH1.Hist.HC.44** Explain the causes and effects of technological innovations and early urbanization on societies in **Asia**, Europe, Africa and the Americas.

### ***World History II:***

**WH2.Hist.HC.2** Analyze how advancements in technology and the spread of knowledge and scientific learning from Islamic and **Asian** societies promoted maritime exploration and ultimately the expansion of empires.

**WH2.Geo.GI.3** Compare the modes of contact between Europeans and civilizations in Africa, **Asia**, and the Americas, including networks of trade, resistance to colonization, and warfare.

**WH2.Inq.ID.5** Explain the historical context of “Eurocentrism” and the lasting social, political, and economic impacts on countries and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in Africa, **Asia**, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean and our understanding of sources from the past.

**WH2.Geo.GI.7** Analyze the intellectual, political, and cultural impacts of the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution on global interactions between people and governments in Africa, Europe, **Asia**, and the Americas.

**WH2.Hist.DHC.8** Assess the political, cultural, social, and economic impact of interactions between Indigenous peoples and European colonizers in Africa, the Americas, and **Asia** and how European colonizers institutionalized and maintained colonial power around the world.

**WH2.Geo.GI.9** Evaluate the environmental and cultural impact of the exchange of food crops, trade goods, diseases, and ideas between Africa, **Asia**, Europe, and the Americas.

**WH2.Econ.GE.24** Explain the detrimental impact of the European industrial revolution on global markets, such as the **Indian** and Egyptian textile industry.

**WH2.Hist.CCC.25** Explain how nationalism, economic competition, and social ideologies, such as Social Darwinism and white supremacy, were used to justify the increase of formal imperialism in Africa and **Asia** from 1750–1900.

**WH2.Inq.DC.26** Evaluate the methods by which European colonizers attempted to take formal control of territories and societies in Africa and **Asia**.

**WH2.Hist.DHC.27** Compare the methods of resistance of colonized peoples to European imperialism in Africa and **Asia**.

**WH2.Hist.HC.31** Analyze the causes of World War I in Africa, **Asia**, Europe, and the Americas, considering the role of new technology, alliances, and nationalism.

**WH2.Inq.DP.33** Use primary sources to analyze the role of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in World War I. **confusing-does this belong?**

**WH2.Hist.CCC.35** Analyze the reasons for the consequences of violations of human rights during World War I and World War II, such as the Armenian genocide, **Nanjing Massacre** and Holocaust, and the cooperative global response of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**WH2.Hist.DHC.42** Analyze the causes and events of World War II in Africa, **Asia**, Europe, and the Americas.

**WH2.Hist.HC.45** Evaluate the role of technology on the course and outcomes of World War I and World War II including the role of the **atomic bomb**.

**WH2.Econ.EM.48** Analyze how the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union impacted the governments, economies, and societies in Latin America, Africa, and **Asia** and resulted in direct conflict in those regions.

**WH2.Hist.CCC.50** Contextualize the motivations for decolonization and popular movements for greater autonomy, social justice, and political sovereignty after World War II in Africa, Latin America, and **Asia**.

**WH2.Civ.WG.52** Evaluate the effectiveness of revolutionary leaders and movements in achieving autonomy, social justice, or sovereignty in Africa, **Asia**, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

**WH2.Civ.WG.53** Compare the governments formed after World War II in Africa, Latin America, and **Asia**.

### ***American History II:***

**US2.Civ.LP.11** Using primary and secondary sources, examine legislative actions of the post-Civil War era — including but not limited to the Homestead Act and the Transcontinental Railroad Act — and the

impact it had on the land and people of the Western region of the United States, with a particular focus on the lives and acts of resistance of Native Americans and Chinese immigrants or Chinese Americans.

**US2.Hist.DHC.26** Analyze the response of Mexican Americans and Chinese Americans to the social, economic and political discrimination and opposition they faced, including the use of the label “foreigner” for the American descendants of Mexican Americans and Chinese immigrants.

**US2.Hist.HC.27** Analyze the social, political, and economic factors that led to the United States’ emergence as an imperial power and domestic debates over its role in the world (e.g., the Spanish-American War, Philippine-American War, intervention in Latin America, and the annexation of Hawaii).

**US.Hist.CCC.30** Assess the contemporary political, social and economic impact of American imperialism on different territories and governments (e.g., the Philippines, Marshall Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, etc.).

**US2.Inq.DC.37** Evaluate the portrayal of the “Roaring ‘20s,” including an assessment of the changing societal roles and rights of women, African Americans, Latinx Americans and Asian Americans along with the cultural backlash to these changes.

**US2.Hist.HC.38** Examine the events that led to the United States’ participation in World War II, including the bombing of Pearl Harbor, explaining its impact on the course and outcome of the war.

**US2.Civ.CE.41** Assess the United States’ global commitment to universal human rights before, during, and after World War II, including but not limited to its role during the Holocaust and incarceration of Japanese Americans.

**US2.Inq.DC.42** Analyze the reasons for and the consequences of the United States decision to drop the atomic bomb, including the human and environmental impact of the decision.

**US2.Hist.HC.47** Analyze the legacy of the development of atomic weapons and the nuclear age in American society, and explain how it altered the balance of global power.

**US2.Civ.LP.48** Analyze why the actions of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and the spread of communism in Asia led to fear in the United States, resulting in political efforts to limit civil liberties, including an analysis of McCarthyism and the “Lavender Scare.”

**US2.Hist.HC.49** Evaluate the reasons for and success of containment policies enacted by the United States, including conflicts and proxy wars in Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

**US2.Civ.CE.50** Evaluate the reasons for and impact of opposition to US intervention in foreign countries during the Cold War, including the anti-Vietnam War movement.

**US.2.Hist.CCC.53** Evaluate the impact of Jim Crow and other discriminatory laws in the North and South on the lived experiences of different individuals, including but not limited to Black, Latinx, and Asian Americans across different gender and socioeconomic contexts.

**US2.Hist.CCC.62** Explore the contributions of different groups to the Civil Rights Movement and how it inspired and intersected with various other civil rights movements and events, including but not limited

to: the gay rights movement, the Stonewall Uprising, the American Indian Movement (AIM), the United Farm Workers, the Women's Liberation Movement, the **Asian American Movement**, disability rights movement, Chicano Movement Latinx resistance, and the anti-war movements.

***Government and Civics:***

**GC.Inq.DC.32** Evaluate the use of the court system to achieve or restrict equality historically, including an analysis of *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, *Mendez v. Westminster*, *Loving v. Virginia*, *Obergefell v. Hodges* and ***Korematsu v. United States***.

***DC History and Government:***

**DC.Geo.HP.27** Evaluate the reasons for and impact of changes to the District's population at the end of the 20th century, including the impact of immigration from Central America, **Asia** and Africa.

**DC.Geo.HP.33** Use a case study approach to evaluate the history of at least two different communities in Washington, DC and how the communities have grown and changed over time (e.g., **Chinatown**, Columbia Heights, Mt. Pleasant, Shaw).

**DC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Monthly Meeting**  
**Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

**Testimony Presented by:**  
**Sally Schwartz, Globalize DC**

Good evening, members of the Board. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I'm Sally Schwartz, Director of Globalize DC, a nonprofit organization that works to promote global education, language learning, and study abroad for DC public school students. We do most of our work in the out-of-school space, but there is no denying that what gets taught during the school day every day is most important in what students learn. This is why we are very interested in the revision of these social studies standards and why we are also very concerned about what may be a huge missed opportunity.

Around the year 2000 the field of global education experienced a fundamental shift. Before that time K-12 students of course learned about the world – primarily in world history and geography classes. But at the turn of the century, with increasing globalization, growing diversity in our communities and workplaces, and rapid technological advances (especially the internet), a new model emerged – one designed to infuse global content and perspectives across disciplines, across grade levels, and for all students in all schools. It is no longer about “us” and “the rest of the world” -- “us” and “them.” We’re too interconnected. We’re all “us.” As Martin Luther King, Jr said, we live in a “World House.” We can’t understand our own history, our current predicament, or solve our biggest problems unless we think and act globally. This approach has been widely embraced, by the US Department of Education, OECD, Council of Chief State School Officers, state offices of education, and this is the forward facing approach that the State Board of Education adopted when it called for an **explicit, ongoing thread around global content and perspectives** in its 2020 Guiding Principles resolution on the Social Studies Standards. It is extremely disappointing then that OSSE chose not to do this, despite the fact that there are a lot of global standards included. The draft identifies global anchor standards within the different disciplines - Geography, Government, Economics. But this doesn’t do the job. This is old framing. Probably the answer is for OSSE to add a global competence anchor standard within its inquiry arc.

There are other problems with the current draft, which I won’t have time in this testimony to go into in detail, but I’ll make note of the most important and can say more later.

**Culture is not adequately addressed.** Learning about culture – what it is; the diversity of world cultures and the importance of respecting difference; how to communicate and work across cultures; how to resolve cross-cultural conflict; the ways in which culture is transmitted, transformed, and connected to our history, our political and economic systems – is essential to educating for global competence.

**The Grade 6 standards are extremely problematic,** and in my view require a complete rewrite.

“Culture” has been removed from the title of this course and it should be restored. Beyond this, both the structure and content are not well developed and try to cover far too much material.

**The draft suffers from inconsistency across grade levels and courses in terms of the specificity of content.** Some standards are very specific and narrowly drawn; others (particularly in world history) are overly broad, generic.

**We appear to devote much greater attention (and standards) to ancient history as compared to recent history.** I think this needs another look and some recalibration.

**World History II adopts a very constraining Eurocentric approach.** There appears to be so much history left out or left to the discretion of the teacher or curriculum writer. I wonder what students will actually learn about South America, Africa, Asia, Europe (for that matter) beyond the Western expansionist, imperialist framing of the course. That is important content but it is also vital for students to understand that other countries have their own histories, complexities, and agency.

Finally, I want to again urge that the public comment period be extended to give community members adequate time to digest this complex standards document, to engage in real discussion, and offer thoughtful feedback. The end product will benefit from civic engagement, which of course is what we’re trying to teach our students through these standards. And in the area of social studies and global issues, DC has such a wealth of resources and real world expertise, not to mention careers pathways requiring global competencies. It seems foolhardy not to take full advantage.

Sally Schwartz, [sally@globalizedc.org](mailto:sally@globalizedc.org)

Asia Society, with the Council of Chief State School Officers, created the Global Competence Framework which is widely used and adapted today. You can read much more and download their original report (free) at <https://asiasociety.org/education/educating-global-competence>.

DC State Board of Education  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Old Council Chambers  
Public Comment on the Draft Revision of DC Social Studies Standards, dated December 16, 2022  
January 18, 2023

Testimony by Erich Martel [ehmartel@starpower.net](mailto:ehmartel@starpower.net)

Ward 3

Retired DCPS high school social studies teacher

(1969-2011: Cardozo HS, Wilson (J-R) HS, Phelps ACE HS)

President and Members of the State Board of Education,

I am Erich Martel, Ward 3 resident, retired DCPS high school social studies teacher. I have worked on DCPS & national standards. As a contractor, I reviewed Minnesota and Texas social studies standards.

Making Reconstruction the era linking US History grades 5, I(7) & II (11) is a positive step, but the standards must be more clearly written.

Recommended changes include:

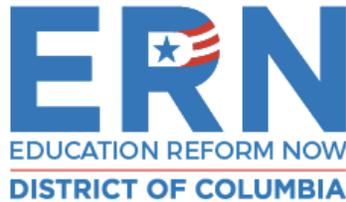
- I. Kindergarten and Grade 1 (This looks like the “Expanding Environments” curriculum)
  - A. Kindergarten is when at risk children must be exposed to content-rich subject area knowledge. By K and Gr1, they will far behind their peers from families that provide knowledge opportunities at home;
  - B. Remove Identity standards, esp. K 2, 3 on p.17; and K15 on p. 19.  
Reason 1: To require a teacher to proactively engage children on sensitive issues of gender, race/ethnicity can create problems. Instead, conflicts on identity issues arise are behavior management matters, not social studies standards.  
Reason 2: The focus of K and Gr1 should be on socialization and respect for each other.
- II. Remove or Change
  - A. “White supremacy” (listed 9 times)  
This term should not be in the standards, because:
    1. Its inclusion is not necessary for teaching the origins and continuation of unequal treatment of African-Americans and other people of color in the U.S. The exception would be citing white person who calls for “white supremacy.”
    2. It’s not a description of specific actions, laws, etc. that intentionally harm African-Americans and/or deny their rights; rather, it’s a generalization of them.
    3. Since the “Inquiry” standards call for “**Gathering Diverse Perspectives and Evaluating Evidence,**” students, guided by the teacher, can research instances of mistreatment, violence, deprivation of rights, etc. directed at African-Americans by white Americans during a specific time period, such as post-Civil War Reconstruction or more recent examples. After discussing the events and confirming the accuracy of the sources, the teacher can ask the students how they would characterize those events. Students would provide several options, one of which might be “white supremacy.”  
**By creating a lesson based on facts supported by documentation, any attempt to accuse a teacher or SBOE or OSSE of promoting bias has to argue with the facts, not a generalization.**
  - B. Other Societies Also Have Histories of Abusing Others  
Except for standards on the Armenian genocide during WWI, and WWII and the Holocaust, the history of inhumanity slavery, ethnic supremacy, conquest in other parts of the world since antiquity is absent.

1. The history of humanity has been a complex mix of humanity and inhumanity to others and to one's own. Mistreating others on the basis of arbitrary characteristics is part of the universal human story as are acts of humanity.
2. Behaviors or characterizations such as racism and supremacy of one group over another are examples of ethnocentrism.
3. Slavery did not start in 1619 or 1492. It was practiced at times by societies on every continent before 1492, including the Americas.
4. Failure to include the global history of slavery creates a false picture that Africans in the Americas were the only people who were enslaved.

C. Government

The government standards do not mention the current crisis of democratic rights and the threat of authoritarianism, the growing wealth divide, the stacking of the US Supreme Court by by means of unregulated dark money.

No mention of gerrymandering or the Senate filibuster.



February 9, 2023

## February 15, 2023 Public Meeting

Jessica Giles  
Executive Director  
Education Reform Now D.C.

Greetings Executive Director Butler, Representatives, and staff of the D.C. State Board of Education (SBOE), my name is Jessica Giles. I am a ward seven resident and the Executive Director of Education Reform Now D.C. (ERN DC). ERN D.C. is a non-profit organization fighting for a just and equitable public education system for all students in Washington, D.C. I am pleased to submit my written testimony for the February 15 public meeting.

There are several ways for the Social Studies standards to be strengthened.<sup>12</sup>

### **1. Include financial literacy as a critical content area within the Social Studies standards.**

D.C. does not require students to learn personal financial literacy skills.<sup>3</sup> Personal financial literacy teaches essential concepts like saving, investing, debt, budgeting, setting short- and long-term financial goals, and money management. These are integral to the financial well-being of students. The Colorado Department of Education summarizes personal financial literacy as the following “[it] applies the economic way of thinking to help individuals understand how to manage their scarce resources using a logical decision-making process of prioritization based on analysis of the costs and benefits of every choice.”<sup>4</sup> Currently, ten states<sup>5</sup> offer financial literacy as a part of the social studies standards, and the District should do the same at every appropriate grade level. It’s a shame that students will learn about the Global Economy but not how to manage their budget, which is a vital life skill.

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<sup>1</sup> I have already submitted my public comment to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).

<sup>2</sup> I have a B.A. in History from Furman University and a Master in Public Policy from American University, if a helpful reference point for my public comment.

<sup>3</sup> Seven schools currently offer financial literacy as a course, and 10 city schools offer an Algebra class that includes similar concepts. Source:

<https://wtop.com/education/2022/06/school-zone-how-financial-literacy-is-making-its-way-into-dc-area-school-curricula/>

<sup>4</sup> Pg 6 Colorado Department of Education. Social Studies Standards  
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/cas-ss-p12-2022>

<sup>5</sup> Civics Alliance.

<https://civicsalliance.org/financial-literacy/#:~:text=Five%20states%20offer%20a%20standardized,stand%20Dalone%20personal%20finance%20course.&text=States%20with%20stand%20Dalone%20personal,approach%20to%20financial%20literacy%20education.>



**2. Provide more clarity on how teachers implement the Social Studies standards in practice.**

Currently, the Social Studies standards provide little guidance on how teachers might implement the standards. I recommend adding a section under each grade level that includes context for interpreting, connecting, and applying the content and skills of each standard. Some states already have this essential information in their standards, including California (with a narrative description)<sup>6</sup> and Colorado<sup>7</sup> (through Academic Context and Connections).

**3. Review the Social Studies Standards to ensure ample opportunities for students to receive dual high school and college credit.**

The District must make higher education quality, affordability, and opportunity an absolute priority for our students furthest from opportunity. Therefore, OSSE should take every measure to ensure the updated Social Studies standards allow for dual high school credit and college credit with the institutions of Higher Education (IHE) the District currently has partnerships with and even future ones.

**4. Include important context to various sections within the standards.**

I would be remiss if I did not mention how shameful it was for the College Board to water down the AP African American Studies.<sup>8</sup> I encourage the SBOE to ensure that African Americans' history, culture, and contributions are taught to students in full and unfiltered by including (where appropriate ) such topics as womanism, intersectionality, Black queer studies, and reparations in the Social Studies standards. I recommend a few areas below.

Include: Georgetown University and the Maryland Jesuit's history of "selling" more than 272 enslaved African Americans in 1838 and other documented institutional wealth accumulation from chattel slavery.

- DC.Hist.DHC.8 Evaluate the geographic, economic, and political factors that resulted in the location and design of the nation's capital, including the role of slavery; or
- 3.Geo.HC.19 Describe the lives, experiences, culture, and communities of free and enslaved Black Americans in the Chesapeake Bay region during the 18th century.

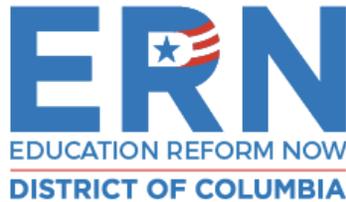
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<sup>6</sup> California Department of Education. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfwwchapter4.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Colorado Department of Education. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/cas-ss-p12-2022>

<sup>8</sup> February 9, 2023. The New York Times. "The College Board Strips Down Its A.P. Curriculum for African American Studies"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/01/us/college-board-advanced-placement-african-american-studies.htm>



Include: Black, Chicana, and Asian American feminist scholars and thought leaders such as Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, Dolores Huerta, Angela Davis, and Yuri Kochiyama.

- US2.Inq.DP.65 Analyze the writings of different perspectives of the Women's liberation movement from women from diverse backgrounds, such as, but not limited to, Gloria Steinem, Elaine Brown, Phyllis Schlafly, and Gloria Anzaldúa

Include: Movements against police brutality.

- 5.Hist.DHC.52 Evaluate the impact and influence of historical movements on modern social movements and organizations.
- US2.Civ.CE.72 Evaluate the tactics of modern social, labor, political, and environmental activist movements in America, measuring their success.

Further, I encourage the SBOE to take action to improve transparency in AP data and exam passage rates. I testified about a few issues, and provided solutions in my testimony before the D.C. Council on this issue last September.<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, I recommend that the D.C. State Board of Education and OSSE review education standards every ten years, at the minimum. Thank you for allowing me to testify.

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<sup>9</sup> The Committee of the Whole Public Hearing on: B24-0665 – Access to Advanced Placement Exams Amendment Act of 2022.  
<https://edreformnow.org/2022/09/27/ern-dc-testifies-on-the-access-to-advanced-placement-exams-amendment-act-of-2022/>

**Testimony of Scott Goldstein, Executive Director, EmpowerEd**  
**State Board of Education Public Meeting**  
**February 15, 2023**

Good Evening Members. Tonight I come to you wearing a few different hats. The bulk of my testimony will focus on the draft social studies standards so I come to you first as a former high school social studies teacher, a DCPS parent and as a lead curriculum writer for the action civics organization Mikva Challenge. I did not have time to review the standards in depth prior to the public comment window closing, so I hope you will include my comments in your feedback to OSSE and your thinking as you move to a vote.

I want to start by saying that I have huge respect for so many of the amazingly talented social studies educators who served on the technical writing committee. It's an all-star cast. And these standards have made several important strides- most importantly the explicit naming and inclusion of standards that make important shifts in the teaching of race, gender and much more.

But as I read through the standards in depth my mentality shifted starkly. So much so that I now believe that the best course now is to begin with the current standards and revise them with the themes of the new standards in mind, rather than trying to tinker with the new standards until it includes all of what it has missed, which is a lot.

I believe those working on the standards should have started with the current standards and an evaluation of what was missing and what was misguided and then figured out how to make space for it, rather than throw it out and start with a blank map. By doing so, they ended up with standards that, unbelievably, fail to mention Chinese civilization, Greece, the Ottomans, Nazis, Stalin or even the word dictator. Though I know the standards writers were aiming to center anti-racism, these standards end up centering Europe more and the rest of the world less. That's just not acceptable. The new standards also hugely miss the boat on the immigrant experience- globally, nationally and locally. As a former DC History teacher, I'm saddened the new standards don't correct the old standards in failing to name the Mexican, Salvadoran and Ethiopian communities in DC. DC History without the explicit teaching about the Salvadoran and Ethiopian communities is not DC History. And throughout the standards the immigrant story is told mostly as it relates to major events in the dominant culture, not through the lens of the story of these communities themselves.

Clearly a decision was made to prioritize broad themes over explicit content. To be honest, as a teacher I always wanted the opportunity to go deeper with fewer standards rather than on the surface with more. I am very aware that as history marches on and we condense a longer timeline into the same years of schooling, the challenge is immense. Not to mention the proper focus on being explicit about Black History, Latin@ history, LGBTQ history and much more. But switching to broader themes and removing the content was unnecessary. Instead, the right

compromise is to plan the courses thematically but still be explicit what content fits under each theme. We must ensure standards are vertically aligned throughout the grades but not isolate themes to a certain grade band. Themes should “touch down” in each grade band and, in each, be tied to modern events students can use as a mental hook.

As a long time Mikva Challenge teacher and now curriculum writer, I am hugely excited by the inclusion of Action Civics in 8th grade. But the action civics frame must not be isolated just to 8th grade. As part of Mikva Challenge I regularly facilitate Project Soapbox events across the country watching young people of all ages speak out on issues important to them. Recently in New York I saw children as young as 5 and 6 deliver powerful speeches- breaking down an issue, understanding their target audience and making an ask. There is truly no grade level too early for this work. In Kindergarten, the standards explore why classrooms and schools have rules and consequences of not following them. This is an opportunity for democracy and action civics education- allowing students to explore how they are made, what consensus means (is it 51 %, is it 100 %?) and to make their own suggested school rules and even propose them to the principal.

As an educator I think we need to be very mindful not to turn social studies teaching into the worst aspects of ELA and math teaching- expecting that teachers be on exactly the right page of the right book on the right day- rather than providing content paths under the thematic umbrellas and allow educators to pursue subjects students latch on to more deeply. If we build standards without thinking about how teachers get evaluated using them, we will undermine implementation, hamstring educators, and weaken student inquiry.

There's much more to say on these standards, and I intended to also testify this evening about some promising solutions-oriented thinking about mental health, school safety and school schedules, but there was too much to say about the social studies standards. I'd be happy to explore those topics with any of you offline and want to invite you all, on behalf of EmpowerEd, to our February 28th unveiling of our report and playbook on The Promise of Flexible Scheduling for Schools. Thank you.

## Testimony before the DC State Board of Education on State Board of Education on Social Studies Standards

By: Laura Fuchs

Given: February 15, 2023

Testimony is done in parts – I will likely return to expand on various pieces over the next few months. I focused almost exclusively on doing a deep dive in to World History II standards because I believe that is my area of expertise as well as a less “popular” area when compared with US History and Government.

- 1) **Guiding Principles** – Covered February 15, 2023
- 2) Suggestions
- 3) Implementation & Timeline
- 4) Personal Qualifications
- 5) Key Takeaways – Covered January 18, 2023

### 1) **Guiding Principles**

- *Standards represent what students have a right to know and be taught.*  
The current standards have removed significant portions of content thereby removing students rights to learn said content. There are major historical events that would be incredibly hard to justify in depth teaching in their own right if one were to follow the current standards with fidelity and hope to cover them – for example the Iranian Revolution, The Guatemalan Civil War and Genocide, the Indian/Pakistan split, Apartheid in South Africa and much more. Instead they would be looped into tiny chunks to be compared and only taught in reaction to European and American actions.
- *Students have a right to learn global historical content outside of a white supremacist framing and constant micro-comparisons to European/American actions.*  
We should not be attempting to wholly make all social studies **content** standards flexible aka optional. Unfortunately, in the system of limited time and resources that we are in, too often something that is deemed “flexible” is something that gets cut, minimized or swept to the side for schools serving students with the greatest needs – especially East of the River. I applaud DC’s commitment to two years of World History at the high school level and think that it should be continued. For many of our students these two years will be the last that they spend on international studies and world history. We must give students as great an exposure to the world around them as possible in preparing them to be global citizens.

In attempting to balance depth over breadth, the current standards have actually increased the breadth and all but eliminated the ability to deep dive on anything except key European Historical Events. If you go through the current content standards they are all about Europe save for one optional reference to the Haitian Revolution. Examples of content not mentioned: Chinese Revolution, Iranian Revolution, El Salvadoran Civil

War, Pinochet, Nelson Mandela and Apartheid, Ho Chi Minh, I could literally go on forever because the actual content could fit in one paragraph.

- *The standards should reflect our students and their history while exposing them to the broader world, global perspectives and the myriad of cultures that make up our world today.*

We should be looking at the world from the perspectives of people around the world. This is incredibly challenging due to resources and language barriers. But it *is* possible. This requires us to not frame everything as a reaction to “Major Events™” driven by “Western Powers” and instead to look deeper into countries and area studies to get to know the dynamics of those regions to *then* see how their history is much deeper than a pure reaction and to better understand their perspectives on how some of these major events affected the course of their lives.

We have to be incredibly intentional about what is and is not mentioned in our standards because the standards tell us and our students what is important:

What *is* mentioned is the Holocaust. I am Jewish and much of my extended family was murdered in the Holocaust. But why is the Holocaust and Anti-semitism explicitly listed and the Rwandan Genocide and Islamophobia are not?

What *is* mentioned is the Russian Revolution. Again, super important and something that I enjoy teaching very much, but why mention that revolution explicitly mentioned and not those in other nations that also changed the world such as those in China and Iran.

What *is* mentioned is World Wars I and II in comparative detail and then all the other *continents* are listed as how were they affected by it.

What *is* mentioned is a list of “enlightenment” philosophers, what is not mentioned are ANY OTHER PHILOSOPHIES AND THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THEM AT ALL.

There is also ZERO content provided from more recent time periods. Updating standards was an opportunity to bring in more recent historical events such as the Syrian Civil War and Refugee Crisis, the Arab Spring, China and today’s global economy, and so much more.

## 2) Suggestions

- *The number of conceptual standards needs to be significantly reduced and replaced with historical, geographic and cultural content.*

While there are fewer standards if you count them. The standards that are included are so massive and cover so much potential content that they actually don’t reduce the overall amount of material that would arguably need to be covered in order to complete the standards in a satisfactory manner.

Because the standards are almost all conceptual in nature, they also make the course very hard to organize. If someone were to do the standards as written they would lead to endless comparisons and small chunks about each country, largely in reference to Western-centric framing.

This can be fixed by choosing **2-3 major** concepts per unit at the maximum and then adding back in the required and/or potential content that would go into teaching those concepts.

- *Historical content needs to be added to every single concept that remains in the standards.*

The 2006 standards are not written in a way that incorporates higher order thinking skills, but they are not wholly white-washed and should be examined carefully because there are some interesting connections to DC and more that are unique and worth keeping. I learned a lot my first few years in DC just from reading the standards and realizing I had not been taught all of this in the International Baccalaureate curriculum I studied growing up. While it is not really possible to go deep on every single standard that is included, it provides a large menu of what we could be covering.

Our existing standards could be added to some of the existing (and significantly pared down) conceptual standards as examples (some required, some optional) to provide clear direction and learning opportunities.

Sample Newly Drafted Standard:

WH2.Civ.WG.52 Evaluate the effectiveness of revolutionary leaders and movements in achieving autonomy, social justice, or sovereignty in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Suggestion addition pulled from 2006 World History II Standards:

**Utilize 1 of the following examples from each region.**

*Africa*

10.11.3 Explain the Pan-Africanism movement, the formation of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), and various independence movements (e.g., Congo conflict and Patrice Lumumba; struggle over Angola and Mozambique; and the Zimbabwe War of Independence) and African American support (e.g., the Council on African Affairs and the African Liberation Support Committee). (P, S)

10.11.5 Explain the fight against and dismantling of the apartheid system in South Africa and evolution from white minority government, including the role of Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress, and the role of African Americans, such as Randall Robinson, and the TransAfrica in ending apartheid. (P, S)

## *Asia*

10.12.1 Analyze the Chinese Civil War, the rise of Mao Zedong, and the triumph of the Communist Revolution in China. (P, M)

10.12.5 Explain the historical factors that created a stable democratic government in India and the role of Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indira Gandhi in its development. (P)

## *Latin America*

10.14.2 Explain the struggle for economic autonomy, political sovereignty, and social justice that led to revolutions in Guatemala, Cuba, and Nicaragua and armed insurgencies and civil war in many parts of Central America. (P, M)

10.14.3. Describe Cuba as a theater of the Cold War, including the role of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Missile Crisis. (G, P, M)

10.14.9. Describe the return to populism and socialism in Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. (P)

## *Middle East*

10.15.4 Explain the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 after Khomeini

10.15.5 Trace the defeat of the Soviet Union and the rise of the Mujahideen and the Taliban in Afghanistan. (P, M)

10.15.6. Trace the origins of the Persian Gulf War and the postwar actions of Saddam Hussein. (P, M)

- *Different frameworks and structures must be allowed beyond a Western chronological framing (i.e., area studies style, thematic, etc.)*

It should be possible to maneuver the standards so that the content can be taught in different ways. I personally prefer an “area studies” type model that allows me to dive deep into different regions of the world and allow students to get the regional context, culture, and history. It also allows us to revisit the larger timeline, make the *occasional* comparisons and dive deeper into select countries. Other educators may prefer to do it differently.

No matter what, the framework should not emphasize that Europe/America are “drivers” of modern world history and that the world is just sitting around waiting to react and be affected by it.

- *Non-Western/European/American content must be emphasized and hold a higher percentage of the overall course.*

We can stand to wait and make sure that the standards are significantly improved. I am concerned that while teachers could "choose" to cover certain regions of the world, it is entirely possible to teach this course without diving deeply into particular regions.

I see that the Middle East is not explicitly highlighted (but the Caribbean Islands are) and countries such as Iran are completely omitted as examples which means it is possible to teach this course without mentioning the Iranian Revolution - in fact it seems hard to teach the Iranian Revolution using these standards. There are FAR too many standards on World War I explicitly and not nearly enough on other regions issues. This continues to perpetuate a European lens through which we are almost forced to teach World History II.

Another glaring omission is the split between India and Pakistan. The fact that it isn't mentioned anywhere as even a potential example is a huge problem and a slap in the face to some of the driving historical events that likely will only be covered in a World History Class. Instead too much time is once again given to issues that will be covered in US History. Again, perpetuating a Western perspective on the modern era.

This is fully apparent with the omission of the Chinese Revolutions of the 20th century. How can we teach World History and ignore this entire region explicitl. It would be possible for a teacher to teach the entire course and never mention it. This is not acceptable.

One area that is sorely lacking in the 2006 standards is Latin American and Caribbean history in World History II. As a teacher in this content area, and someone who wrote their graduate thesis on Truth Commissions in Guatemala, this is both personal and professional for me. The history is incredibly important to understanding the world and directly touches on students in our classroom. It is important that this content not get left out and only addressed in the new standards by mention of continents.

I am highly disappointed in how these standards are still perpetuating a racist and white supremacist world view and pushing a teaching of world history that is entirely centered on the Western perspective. This would be easy to fix with explicit references to more examples of non-western events which are largely left out. It demonstrates a limited understanding of WORLD history and shows the bias of the creators. I am saddened but not surprised that I will have to continue to push for a truly world history oriented content out of this mess.

### **3) Implementation and Timeline**

I came to DCPS in 2007 and the new standards had just been passed. Michelle Rhee had just taken over the District and her understanding of what was going on was limited (at best), and social studies was not something she was focused on. Courses were completely changed and the teachers who had been teaching a long time were just starting to learn what those standards were. I saw what a poor and hasty roll out of standards could do. Some teachers

just taught things the way they had (couldn't blame them, when would they have learned the new standards?). There were literally zero materials we could share and use from the system. Everything had to be created ourselves. There was no clear scope and sequence. It was a free for all. While I personally relished that and enjoyed diving into content, I know that it took me several years to get even a course structure I wanted to continue using and building up my pedagogical and content strategies as I went. And I know for too many the course was almost strictly Western Civilizations and the rest was limited at best if taught at all. And again, who could blame them, the textbook we have used (hasn't changed since I got here, no idea when it was adopted) is so surface level as to be the most boring whitewashed rendition of history I've ever seen so everything we use has to be found ourselves.

The current standards do not need to go down this same path. Even if we "pass" them quickly DCPS won't have the time to create high quality materials for PK-12, let alone roll them out to educators in a way that we could meaningfully engage with them. If we roll them out hastily then we will see educators do what they can to scramble and this will result in the status quo reigning on, if not be made significantly worse.

#### **4) Personal Qualifications**

I don't normally go into detail on my own personal education background, but I think it lends some understanding of where I am coming from when I say that the social studies standards *cannot* be passed as written.

I am a Ward 5 resident, DC Public School Social Studies Teacher since 2007, and have taught every single required social studies course as well as many different electives. The courses I have taught for the longest amounts of time (over a decade at this point) are World History II and AP US Government. I am an executive board member of the Washington Teachers Union and Empower DC, which means I hear from people across the District as part of my regular work. I am also a former member on the DC State Board of Education's Credit Flexibility Task Force in 2017 and served on the DC SBOE Social Studies Principles Committee.

My undergraduate degree is in Political Science with Honors from the University of Chicago and I focused primarily on international studies, history and government with a human rights concentration. My honors thesis was on the effectiveness of Truth Commissions, focusing on the one conducted in Guatemala after the American funded genocide of the Mayan people. I have a MAT in Teaching Secondary Social Studies from American University (2009) as well as a Specialist Degree in K-12 Public Education Leadership from George Washington University (2013). My experiences abroad have been varied and not as extensive as I would like. I studied abroad in South Africa during undergrad as well as did a 4-month internship in Guatemala. More recently I traveled for a month through the Fund for Teachers program to Vietnam to improve my understanding and teaching of Vietnam in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. All of these experiences have greatly informed my personal understanding and desire to teach World History from a global perspective instead of a "Western" / white supremacist perspective. I have continued my education here at home over the years as well taking

courses almost every single year to improve my understanding of various global regions (Georgetown Middle East Institute, China Institute, etc.) and the US Government (James Madison's We The People, National Archives, etc.), as those are the two courses that I have taught the most frequently.

## 5) Key Takeaways

- a. **Guiding Principles** – Standards are the bare minimum that students have a right to learn. DC should ensure that students have the opportunity to learn about world history from a global perspective and in the modern era. The Draft World History II standards have almost zero historical content and have been moved to almost purely conceptual understandings. Furthermore, it is framed as the “West” (defined for this purpose as Europe and the United States of America) being the primary drivers of modern history and the rest of the world as reacting to them. This is the definition of white supremacy.
- b. **Implementation and Timeline** - The draft document does not take DC's current racist implantation of the World History II standards into account and further opens the door to this kind of behavior. Allowing educators to freely pick and choose content to match the concepts. DCPS will not be able to update their curriculum and train their educators in time for the new standards to be rolled out in SY23-24. Therefore, we can and must push back their overly aggressive timeline to allow more input into the standards and opportunities to fix what is wrong.
- c. **Suggestions** - This is possible to fix, and some possible ideas could be easy to implement. But if it is not *significantly changed* it should **not** be passed as is. We do not need to rush and should do it right in case it takes a long time to update again.
- d. **Personal Qualifications** – My personal education and experiences make me expertly qualified to provide commentary on the World History II standards in particular.

Dear Board Member,

I am Erich Martel, a retired DCPS high school history teacher (Cardozo HS, Wilson HS, Phelps ACE HS). [ehmartel@starpower.net](mailto:ehmartel@starpower.net) (Ward 3 resident)

The draft Social Studies Standards should be rejected; the 2006 standards should be revised. Because standards for DC, US and world history guide curricula and teacher lesson plans, they must be clearly and logically sequenced. That enables students to learn and understand how significant events in the past led to the present. Teaching students the chronological unfolding of events allows them to learn and visualize important sequences of cause and effect.

The sequences of events become comprehensible, when grouped together by their common theme, that's why we label events from 1861 to 1865 "the Civil War." Grouping events by common theme makes cognitive sense, because that's how minds catalogs information.

But, in the draft's grade-level "Driving Concepts," no standard has a chronological or thematic connection to the next one. Given high rates of teacher turnover, some history teachers with limited history background and the pressures of social promotion, the absence of a clear user-friendly standards framework complicates teaching and learning.

**Inquiry** is not the "core" of history instruction. It's a valid, but time consuming, learning activity.

**Remove "Identity"** Children go to school to learn about the world. The duty of teachers is to teach and nurture their students, not proactively affirm their impressions of a student's racial, ethnic or gender identity.

**"White supremacy"** - Instead of labeling a unit "white supremacy," teachers should use primary and secondary sources on specific topics and let students decide how to characterize events or patterns.

**Multiple perspectives.** Students' points of view can illuminate a topic and should be welcomed, but they must learn how to base them on evidence. There are no inherent racial or gender perspectives.

The multiple and continuing threats to our democracy and way of life by the Supreme Court are well documented and deserve more than isolated mention in US history and government standards. A short and insightful description was written by Pres. Reagan's solicitor general Charles Fried (quoted in my 12/3/22 Wash Post letter), who wrote:

"the **Roberts [Supreme] court ... reactionary [plan] is a program to repeal the twentieth century**,... including the reforms of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson." (full letter and background with links attached). For greater detail on the meaning of "repeal the twentieth century," see & follow (AFL-CIO political director, Michael Podhorzer):

<https://michaelpodhorzer.substack.com/p/to-the-supreme-court-the-20th-century>

Students need to learn how dark money put an anti-democratic supermajority on the Supreme Court with the goal of repeating the dismantling of Reconstruction and is now intent on repealing the progress and protections of the past 120 years and their future.

Thank you

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The Letter (it also appeared in the 12/3/22 print edition):

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/12/02/supreme-courts-ideology-is-partisan/>

**Opinion: The Supreme Court’s ideology is partisan**

Regarding Ruth Marcus’s Nov. 25 op-ed, “[Can the Supreme Court find its ethical compass?](#)”:

The Supreme Court’s extremist ideology is partisan. After being auditioned and vetted for ideological conformity by the Federalist Society, as Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) reports in “[The Scheme](#)” and promoted by a \$400 million dark-money campaign to confirm them, Donald Trump’s three appointed justices — and Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. — knew they were part of a court-packing plan.

[Charles Fried](#), President Ronald Reagan’s solicitor general, who testified in support of Chief Justice Roberts’s nomination, perceptively wrote in a [Nov. 24 letter to the New York Review of Books](#) that the press incorrectly calls **the Roberts court** conservative: “The correct **term is ‘reactionary,’ and the best description of what they are doing is a program to repeal the twentieth century**, ... including the reforms of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Think of administrative law and administrative agencies’ regulation of business, regulation of elections and campaign finance laws ... the empowerment and regulation of public- and private-sector labor unions, the secularization of publicly funded primary and secondary education — in all these areas in the last few years the Court has overturned precedents and doctrines, understandings and practices reaching back at least to 1903. And there may be more to come.”

The Senate needs to conduct a public hearing into the use of dark money to ideologically capture the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Roberts needs to give full cooperation. This is a lot bigger than adopting a voluntary code of ethics.

**Erich Martel**, *Washington*

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The Roberts Court’s project of undoing the federal government’s role in “*promot[ing] the general welfare*” of “*We the People*” constitutes a *de facto* rolling judicial coup. The President and Congress must find the constitutional means of preventing it. The media must expose the court’s partisan capture by unmasking the identities and goals of the dark money that funded it. At this point, justices’ ethical abuses are secondary to their original abuse of failing to divulge that they auditioned for their nominations, then dishonestly hid their extreme anti-democratic ideologies during Senate confirmation.

**Charles Fried**, a professor at Harvard Law School, previously served as Pres. Reagan’s solicitor general. In 1989 he argued before the U.S. Supreme Court against state funding of abortions in [Webster v. Reproductive Health Services](#) and in 2005 testified before the US Senate in support of John Roberts nomination to US Chief Justice. But in a November 30, 2021 NY Times opinion, “[I Once Urged the Supreme Court to Overturn Roe. I’ve Changed My Mind](#)” (published the day before the SC heard *Dobbs v. Jackson*), he concluded that, “**To overturn Roe now would be an act of constitutional vandalism - not conservative, but reactionary.**”

His succinct analysis deserves wide distribution. Please share, esp. with journalists, editorial writers, columnists, bloggers, etc.

- Erich Martel

Retired DCPS history/social studies teacher

[ehmartel@starpower.net](mailto:ehmartel@starpower.net)

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**Additional Background:**

Charles Fried’s NY Times Guest Essay, November 11, 2021 (“I Once Urged the Supreme Court to Overturn Roe. I’ve Changed My Mind.”) is here:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/30/opinion/supreme-court-roe-v-wade-dobbs.html>

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In 2021 & 2022, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) delivered a series of 12 speeches in the US Senate titled, “The Scheme,” exposing the scheme by right-wing donor interests to capture the U.S. Supreme Court and achieve through Supreme Court decisions what they could not get through the other two branches of the US Government: [The Scheme: Sheldon's Court Capture Speeches](#)

These speeches are now available in the his 2022 book, “**The Scheme: How the Right Wing Used Dark Money to Capture the Supreme Court**”: <https://www.amazon.com/Scheme-Right-Money-Capture-Supreme/dp/1620977389> (the first four chapters can be read on this site)

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An excellent historical account of how far right superrich, openly hostile to democratic majorities and government regulations that protect people over profit, is Duke U professor Nancy MacLean’s “**Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right’s Stealth Plan for America**” (2017): <https://www.amazon.com/Democracy-Chains-History-Radical-Stealth/dp/1101980966>

Interview with MacLean:

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/03/08/democracy-chains-interview-author-nancy-maclean>

Excerpt:

“[The dark money donors] want to change the U.S. Constitution so they can put locks and bolts on what popular majorities can do in our politics. They want to transform our society radically ... into a society that most of us would not recognize and I don’t think many of us would want to live in. ...”

State Superintendent of Education, OSSE  
President and Members, DC SBOE  
February 10, 2023

Review of the December 16, 2022 Social Studies Standards Draft (Draft Standards)  
& December 16, 2020 SSAC Social Studies Standards Guiding Principles (Principles Guide)

Submitted by  
Erich Martel [ehmartel@starpower.net](mailto:ehmartel@starpower.net)  
Retired DCPS high school social studies teacher  
(1969-2011: Cardozo HS, Wilson (now Jackson-Reed) HS, Phelps ACE HS)  
Ward 3 Resident

State Superintendent, President and Members of the State Board of Education,

I taught world history, US history, AP US history, US Government; reviewed social studies drafts for National History Standards, Minnesota & Texas for Achieve, Inc., and Minnesota as a contractor [http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2004/02/17\\_pugmiret\\_standards/](http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2004/02/17_pugmiret_standards/)  
I also assisted with the drafting of the DCPS 2006 Social Studies Standards.

Before reviewing the deficiencies of the 2022 Social Studies Standards Draft, I am asking you to consider the advice and insights of the following.

**“Curriculum Revision” or The Role of the School**

"[T]he school has again but one way, and that is, first and last, to teach them to read, write and count. And if the school fails to do that, and tries beyond that to do something for which a school is not adapted, it not only fails in its own function, but it fails in all other attempted functions. Because no school as such can organize industry, or settle the matter of wages and income, can found homes or furnish parents, can establish justice or make a civilized world."

**-W.E.B. DuBois, address to Georgia State Teachers Convention, 1935**

(in King, Kenneth James, Pan-Africanism and Education in the Southern States and East Africa, 1971), p. 257)

1935 was the year he published his pathbreaking **“Black Reconstruction in America”**

It’s safe to add history, geography, government and economics to his list of expectations of the school. And even now, teaching students “to read, write and count” is at best showing mixed results.

**Why Facts Matter**

Trevor Noah’s interview with historian Timothy Snyder on his [then] new (2017) book, *On Tyranny* (7 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvuM8H8jwU>

“The Roberts Court’s ... program [is] to repeal the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”!!

By Charles Fried, Pres. Reagan’s Solicitor General, quoted in my 12/3/22 Wash Post letter

<https://tinyurl.com/yucvub26>

Fried’s describes the peril we face: A rolling Sup Ct judicial coup, eerily similar in substance and intent to the SC decisions that gutted the intent of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to enable white reactionary terror usher in nine decades of Jim Crow denial of the basic rights of citizenship.

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**The deficiencies in the 2022 Social Studies Standards Draft greatly outweigh its good points.**

It should, therefore, be scrapped and rewritten to allow the knowledge-centered standards to take precedence over the confusing amalgam of “identity,” skills, undefined terms, lecturing insistence on ethnic/racial/gender correctness and a glaring double standard for US history versus world history. The DC Social Studies Standards should be a model of how to teach world history, US history, state (DC) history and civics/government in a manner that teaches “hard history” that is defensible against attacks without watering it down. That means centering the standards and the instructional advice to teachers on the facts, not on sweeping generalizations of the facts.

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**Specifics**

**K to 2** (Why was pre-K dropped? – Please add pre-K, which is in the 2006 standards)  
Pre-K, K, 1 and 2 are the grades where our schools can build children’s foundation of knowledge necessary for closing the achievement gap.

The presumptive foundation of social studies standards is the ability to read. Do you (OSSE, SBOE) know what reading programs are used in every LEA PreK – 2 classroom? If you don’t know, please find out.

You each know 3-5 year old children from your family and friends. You know how much they know from the knowledge they have been exposed to: museums, trips, zoos, parks, woods, pet care, gardens, shopping, sports events, games, tv, etc. Decoding the orthographically difficult English language spelling system is a lot easier if the child already knows the concepts – and are then taught to decode, i.e. via phonics, not whole word guessing as in “whole language.”

At risk children know fewer concepts, because they haven’t been exposed to them. For that reason, starting in pre-K, they need to be exposed to expanding subject-area content knowledge in history, geography, science, art, music, etc.

Check the research:

"The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap" by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley [The American Educator](http://www.aft.org/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html), (Spring 2003), [http://www.aft.org/american\\_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html](http://www.aft.org/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html)  
And Hirsch, E.D. "Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge - of Words and the World: Scientific Insights into the Fourth Grade Slump and Stagnant Reading Comprehension" in [The American Educator](http://www.aft.org/american_educator/spring2003/AE_SPRNG.pdf), (Spring 2003), [http://www.aft.org/american\\_educator/spring2003/AE\\_SPRNG.pdf](http://www.aft.org/american_educator/spring2003/AE_SPRNG.pdf).

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**Remove all “Identity” Standards!**

Example: **K.Inq.ID.3. “Develop an understanding of gender, one’s own identity, family, ethnicity, culture, religion, and ability.”** (p17)

To be blunt: It’s intrusive and none of our business!

It is not the job of the public schools to promote racial, ethnic, gender, etc. identities. Any attempt, however well-intentioned, risks reinforcing existing stereotypes that children quickly pick up from what they hear and see. These are sensitive issues. People have lost their lives over misuse, joking use or intentional bullying use of these concepts and associated terms. The emphasis on racial, ethnicity, gender identities in the standards is overly insistent.

See Multiple Perspectives

All teachers are responsible for creating a welcoming environment for all children. Teachers are responsible for making each child welcome, not because of that child’s presumed identity, but because the child has the right to be in the classroom community as a full member. When issues around race, ethnicity, gender arise, they should be addressed on the basis of that right. When appropriate, children may be asked to share information about their family or background.

The K-2 standards only promote a very narrow view of “Identity.” Everyone has multiple identities based on our specific interests, etc. So do children. Identities include favorite games, sports, tv shows, pets, etc.

Secondly, focusing a child on his/her identity reverses the proper focus of school: to learn about the world and the people in it.

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**Multiple Perspectives is improperly tied to “identity” and doesn’t require evidence.**

A perspective is an opinion, which may be fact-based or may be a misunderstanding.

Anyone can have an opinion or perspective on any issue.

In the standards, there are no criteria for the factual basis of a perspective. It is implied that a perspective is valid simply on the basis of it being the view of a group that faced discrimination or harms by white people or non-LGBTQ+ people.

In the present political environment of hostility to the history of harms, it is even more important that students learn the importance of grounding their views on factual evidence. Opinions and generalizations are not validated by virtue of being one of several “multiple perspectives.”

There is no single Black or Latinx or LGBTQ+ cluster of “perspectives.”

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**White Supremacy and Whiteness**

Question: Is it possible for a teacher to teach the history of the mistreatment of African-Americans, indigenous peoples, etc. and LGBTQ+ without labeling it a unit on White Supremacy?

I would hope the answer is yes. Teachers in DCPS have been teaching lessons based on evidence from good textbooks, primary sources, interviews with people with the relevant experiences, guest speakers, etc. for as long as I can recall in DCPS, 1969.

Carter G Woodson worked with DCPS teachers in the late 1940s and probably earlier.

Terms like “white supremacy,” “racism,” “homophobia,” etc. are generalizations of factual events.

When misused as in the draft standards, it raised the question, “who does it include?” which allows opponents of fair play to claim that it victimizes them.

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**Teaching About Gender Identities and Sexuality**

**2.Inq.ID.29** “Analyze the daily lives of different individuals in ancient societies including histories of same-sex relationships and gender fluidity in civilizations.”

I doubt whether many 2<sup>nd</sup> grade children are able to understand the concept of gender fluidity. It’s a topic for health educators, not social studies teachers.

“same-sex relationships” – The question I raise is: At what grade level or age can this be comfortably introduced to children by a teacher? This needs to be determined on the basis of student readiness.

OSSE needs to provide clear guidance. The positive intention can easily run into trouble if not thoughtfully introduced.

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**Errors:**

**3.Hist.DHC.28** Compare and contrast the lived experiences of diverse Washingtonians from different time periods (e.g., **Opechancanough**, Henry Fleet, **Benjamin Banneker**, Frederick Douglass, William Costin, Mina Queen, Anna Julia Cooper).

**Opechancanough** was a contemporary of the Jamestown colony. There was no Washington at the time. **Benjamin Banneker** assisted in the survey for the 1st ten weeks (he maintained the regulator clock and made astronomical sightings during the day and at night) of the Federal City, the future Washington, but **Banneker never lived there**. The survey began in the Virginia portion, that was retroceded in 1846.

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**US2.Civ.LP.11** “Using primary and secondary sources, examine legislative actions of the post-Civil War era — including but not limited to **the Homestead Act and the Transcontinental Railroad Act.**”

**Correction:** These two acts were passed in 1862 during the Civil War. The effort to pass them had been blocked by the slave states before the CW, because it would lead to slavery opponents moving to the areas that were opened up.

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**DC OSSE Social Studies Standards Guiding Principles**

By the **Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee (SSSAC)**

Drafting Social Studies Standards December 16, 2020

Many of the deficiencies in the Social Studies Standards Draft can be traced to the Guiding Principles document. The following examines specific Guiding Principles that appear to be responsible for the problems.

The Preamble to the Guiding Principles states that

OSSE should seek **standards writers who reflect the demographics and experiences of District students and of the communities they are writing about** (e.g., seeking LGBTQ+ writers, (b) **ensuring inclusion of advocates for people with disabilities, teaching Black history through the words of Black people, giving agency to BIPOC4 rather than discussing only in relation to white people**) (p4)

**Problems:**

- (a) The Guidance omits the most important qualification: **Writers who are knowledgeable about DC, US and world history, geography and government and understand the role of standards in guiding curricula.** This does a disservice to all communities the standards are intended to serve.
- b) Did OSSE advertise for qualified social studies draft writers who are knowledgeable about history (DC, US, World), geography, civics/government, economics?
- b) Inclusion is mandated by US and DC laws; it’s not a standards or curricular matter.
- c) “Teaching Black history through the words of Black people, giving agency to BIPOC4 rather than discussing only in relation to white people”
  - The words of Black people are implicit in the 2006 SSS;
  - “giving agency to BIPOC ... white people”
  - What is this referring to:
    - Sources of history?



Daisy Christodoulou, The Importance of Content in Student Learning: (See excerpt below)  
<https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/spring-2014/minding-knowledge-gap>

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The SSAC Guide states:

“**Social studies is an inquiry-based discipline.**” (p5)

**Problem:** Neither “**inquiry-based**” nor “**inquiry**” is explained. No evidence of its effectiveness is cited; yet, it is presented as an authoritative statement.

Inquiry is one of many activities that teachers might use to engage students in a more narrowly focused learning activity. A similar activity is National History Day, which offers a variety of formats, but does not replace instruction.

When inquiry activities are used as the core instructional activity, the amount of knowledge students will learn is severely limited.

**OSSE should inform the SBOE:** Is that the intention of these standards? Because, if it is, there is no way students will be able to learn more than a small portion of the standards in each grade.

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“**Eurocentrism**”

This an accusation of bias. It doesn’t distinguish white Americans from Europeans.

Nor does it explain the change in the standards of historical research over the past 100 years, research that helped establish fair and unbiased treatment of all Americans and other cultural areas of the world.

In a sense, however, the Standards Draft is itself “Eurocentric” or a flipped version thereof.

In the World History standards and those addressing the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there is no mention of slavery in other parts of the world.

In fact, despite brief mention of the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide and the Nanjing Massacre, there is no mention of slavery, genocide, execution of war prisoners anywhere beyond the responsibility of the US and European colonizers. In the rest of the world, kingdoms grew, empires were established, but none of this occurred, one would believe, through massive brutality. The rest of the world in these OSSE standards was like a golden book fairy tale.

That is not the picture of the world students should take from the study of world history.

Human beings have been capable of great achievements, empathy and high standards of morality, but also mass murder and unspeakable horrors, too.

Remember Frederick Douglass’s July 4<sup>th</sup> oration. He was holding white Americans accountable for the soaring words of the Declaration of Independence. Why didn’t he compare the treatment of enslaved Americans to another standard, say from West Africa or the Aztecs or Incas or .....?

Because there wasn’t another that spoke of a universal message.

The challenge of teaching history is to find a balance. One doesn’t cancel the other; both need to be taught so they can be understood.

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The SSAC Guide states:

“The revised D.C. Social Studies Standards should use **active voice and precise language to ensure that actions in history are attributed to specific actors. The current standards employ passive voice** in a number of places, especially around acts of **white supremacy.**” (p6)

Problems: “white supremacy”

1) “current standards employ passive voice [to avoid attribution of] white supremacy.”

The writer did not state precisely which 2006 standards are guilty of the charge

2) “active voice and precise language”

This surprising accusation reflects a double standard, because the following two draft standards employ the passive voice and do not use “precise language”:

4.Hist.DHC.24 “Using primary and secondary sources, explain the reasons for and experiences of individuals who were kidnapped and brought to the Americas from Africa as enslaved people.” (SSSD, p57)

4.Inq.ID.33 “Examine the diverse histories of people who were kidnapped from Western Africa (i.e., enslaved people were not a monolith, they represented a diverse group of people who spoke numerous languages, embodied various belief systems, etc.)”. (SSSD, p58)

Curiously, these were two of the 11 sample comments (of the reported 221) that the OSSE reporter included in the slide show at the Feb 1, 2023 SBOE meeting.

It is widely known that merchants from European countries and later from ports in New England, New York, Philadelphia and other Western Hemisphere ports were the exclusive agents of Middle Passage, but many still think they were also the original captors of free people. The ambiguous passive voice, “people who were kidnapped from Africa,” allows for a reader to think that both the kidnapping and the transport to the Americas was carried out by the same European or American merchants and crew. In fact, the great majority of enslaved Africans were captured in African wars or kidnapped in the interior by people from other African societies and moved to the coast often through a network of indigenous African traders. See attached slave trade packet.

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Missing Skills

Taking notes and effective note-taking strategies  
Maintaining a notebook for class notes & textbook notes

How to analyze a primary source document

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National Standards for History in the Schools:

I recommend this as one model for US and World History Standards  
They show how to sequence content and separately skills and activities  
<https://phi.history.ucla.edu/nchs/history-standards/>

# Why Africa Became the Primary Source of Slaves in the Western Hemisphere After 1500: How the Economic Concepts of Availability and Convenience Provide an Understanding.

by Erich Martel

Retired DCPS Social Studies History Teacher (World, US, AP US)

District of Columbia Public Schools, 1969-2011

[ehmartel@starpower.net](mailto:ehmartel@starpower.net)

## Introduction

This review of the Atlantic Slave Trade was originally developed for my World History and AP US History classes at Woodrow Wilson High School, where I taught from 1985 to 2010. I put it together after I realized that many students had a distorted view of the peoples of Africa. Many thought of the peoples of Africa as one ethnic group and were surprised to know that European merchants in their sea-going vessels could not land unimpeded by local political authorities.

For almost 100 years historians, anthropologists and archaeologists through critical scholarship and influenced by the anti-colonial movements, have added to our knowledge of African societies in all spheres of human endeavor, including the trans-Atlantic slave trade. A complex institution like the Atlantic Slave Trade system, which impacted people from three continents in every possible way, continues to be a study in progress. History is always open to revision as new previously misunderstood or intentionally suppressed facts are brought to light and, like a scientific theory, more efficiently and completely explain how the known facts fit together.

## Slavery was a global institution

Until recently, slavery was a global institution found in almost every settled human society from the first agricultural settlements. At one time or another most societies enslaved others or were themselves victims of enslavement. When enslavement of Africans to be sold in the Americas began in the 1500s, slavery was widely practiced by indigenous American societies.

In the United States slavery was not a “Southern” institution, but an American institution that affected the entire country even after Northern states abolished it following the American Revolution. It is found in the US Constitution and in state constitutions; it affected western expansion, the transportation of commodities produced by slave labor and the Civil War.

## Statistics of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Until Philip Curtin (Johns Hopkins) published **The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census** in 1969, estimates of the numbers of people in Africa affected by the trans-Atlantic slave trade varied wildly.

Rough estimates (unless specified, all statistics are very approximate):

- Number that arrived in the Americas from all parts of Africa, c. 1500-1888: **12-15 million**
- Number that died between capture and during the Middle Passage voyage:
  - early 1700's: 25% of those initially captured: 2-3 million
  - early 1800's: 10 – 20% of those initially captured: 1- 2 million

Western Hemisphere destinations of those who survived:

- Brazil 35-40%
- Caribbean, esp. Cuba and Hispaniola 35-40%
- 13 British colonies, later the U.S. 5 – 6%
- Other destinations in the Americas 14 – 25% (Peru, the Guyanas, Colombia, etc.)

## **A Surprising Stereotype**

This question is complicated by the development of skin color as a stigma or badge of slavery. This “color-consciousness” was well underway by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and fully in place by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By then, Africans had become the sole source of slaves and had become, in the western mind, the stereotype of the slave. Group stereotypes and discrimination based on color, which later evolved into pseudo-scientific theories of “race” and “racial characteristics,” were products of, not causes of people from Africa becoming the primary sources of slaves for sale in the Western Hemisphere.

In medieval Europe, the high rate of enslavement of the Slavic peoples of eastern Europe and Russia by their Germanic, Viking and Ottoman neighbors led to the replacement of terms for “slave” in classical Latin (*famulus, mancipium, or servus*, depending on usage) with the medieval Latin, “sclavus” (derived from Slav, Slavic).

From the medieval Latin come the modern terms: *slave* (English); *esclave* (French); *esclavo* (Spanish); *escravo* (Portuguese); *schiaivo* (Italian); *Sklav* (German)

Thus, the survival of the word “*slave*” for a person held in bondage by another person is a linguistic reminder that the Slavs of eastern Europe were, at one time, the stereotype of the slave.

## **Slavery and Morality**

Today, the question, “Is slavery immoral or wrong?” seems like a foolish question, since slavery has been almost universally condemned throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, in the 1500’s, at the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery was widely practiced in many parts of the world. Few thought it wrong, especially if the enslaved belonged to “The Other,” i.e. not of one’s own ethnicity, religion, tribe or clan.

## **Chattel Slavery**

Modern slavery in the Americas is often termed “chattel slavery” (derived from “cattle,” i.e. moveable property); like cattle, they were moveable property, as opposed to land or “real estate,” i.e. unmovable property. Many of the large-scale ancient slave systems, like those of ancient Rome and Greece, were also chattel slave systems.

A key feature of chattel slavery is its overt economic character. Chattel slaves produced commodities, crops, ores, etc. for the market, i.e. for profit. Individual slave/plantation owners had little control over the prices they received for their products (mainly sugar in Brazil and the Caribbean – and medieval Mediterranean), so they always sought to hold down costs. If the cost of a slave was too great, plantation owners couldn’t buy slaves and potential sellers would be facing a non-existent market with no buyers. The plantation owner who allowed his costs to exceed his slave-produced income would soon be bankrupt.

The same economic forces defined the monetary limits facing slave traders, the agents of Middle Passage. As profit-motivated merchants or agents of joint stock companies (the predecessor of modern corporations), they sought to keep costs down by finding the least expensive sources of slaves that would allow them to sell at a price that buyers would be willing to pay and still ensure a profit to the seller.

**The Two Determinants of Profit: Availability [of Slaves] and Convenience [Lowest Possible Cost] of Acquiring Them**

**Availability** – There were many places in the world where slaves were actually, as well as potentially, available. **Actual availability** refers to places where slaves were literally for sale in existing slave markets. **Potential availability** refers to places where a market for slaves might develop in response to the slave merchants’ interest. In economic terms, availability is “Supply” and the merchants’ interest in purchasing slaves is “Demand.”

**Convenience** refers to the ease or difficulty slave traders faced in gaining access to geographical locations where slaves were available. While slaves might be potentially available in a number of places, those that required longer time at sea or where purchase costs were higher made them less convenient to a potential buyer.

The indigenous or native inhabitants of the Americas were the first large-scale sources of slaves employed on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century plantations and mines. They were, initially, available through direct or indirect capture following Spanish conquest of the Americas. Their high mortality rate from common Old World diseases and their subsequent population decline reduced their availability leading to the growth of a merchant class that would find alternative and reliable sources of slaves to meet the growing demand.

## **Why Africa met the Criteria of Availability and Convenience and Became the Source of Slaves for the Americas**

Several factors contributed to Africa meeting the criteria of availability and convenience.

### **A. Geographical Factors**

#### **1. Proximity of African Sources to American (N & S) Slave Markets**

In the days of sailing ships, transportation costs were a major portion of the final price the merchant would receive. People held captive in a slave ship had to be fed. Each day at sea increased both cost and the likelihood of captives becoming ill and dying.

West Africa’s most densely populated regions are located between the Senegambia region in the northwest coast and Angola on the southeast coast. Senegambia, the region bounded by the Senegal and Gambia Rivers on the western “bulge” of West Africa, is closest to, and in the same general band of latitude as, the Caribbean and ne Brazil, the two areas of the Americas that absorbed 70-80% of the slaves arriving from Africa.

#### **2. The Trade Winds**

The circular and clockwise pattern of winds and ocean currents in the Atlantic, north of the equator, which blow from east to west in the belt between 5 and 15 degrees north latitude, were ideal for sailing ships traveling from the West African “bulge” to the Caribbean and Brazil. After the slave cargoes were sold, both the prevailing wind and Gulf Stream enabled ships to continue in the circular pattern along the coast of North America, then across the north Atlantic to the British isles and the coast of western Europe, where the winds turn southerly.

Thus, a potential source of slaves in Africa was accessible by sailing south from a European home port, purchasing a “cargo” of slaves, catching the trade winds west to the slave markets in North and South America, then north and east back home.

### **B. Disease Factors**

Immunity to communicable diseases before the availability of immunizations and vaccinations was largely the result of inherited genetic immunity or the chance possession of immunity traits that allow one to recover and pass those traits to some of one’s offspring. Native Americans, Europeans and West Africans had different degrees of immunity depending on the disease environment in

which they and their ancestors had lived. Survivability in an environment swirling with deadly or debilitating microbes depended on one's immunity to them.

One can simplify the diseases into two broad categories: Afro-Eurasian or Old World diseases (sometimes called "European diseases") and Tropical Diseases. The term "Afro-Eurasian" refers to the known origin of these diseases. Most of the better known diseases have been traced to domesticated animals, none of which were domesticated in Europe.

The term "European diseases" refers to the Europeans who were the major carriers of these diseases. The life cycle of the parasite that causes malaria requires a human host for four of its seven metamorphoses and the anopheles mosquito for three. An uninfected *anopheles* mosquito acquires the malaria parasite from an infected human in the same way that an uninfected human acquires it from an infected mosquito.

### 1. Afro-Eurasian Diseases or Old World Diseases

Most of these diseases began after humans domesticated animals and, over time, as diseases mutated, some made the jump to human hosts and adapted to the human anatomy (cattle domesticated in North Africa or the Levant were the source of smallpox). These diseases included measles, mumps, rubella, whooping cough, diphtheria, the plague, influenza and even the common cold. Each time a previously uninfected population group was exposed to these diseases, especially smallpox, it suffered a high death rate. By the 1500s,

**Native Americans**, having been separated from the rest of the human community for over 12,000 or more years, possessed no inherited immunity to these diseases and succumbed to them after being exposed.

Since many **Europeans**, especially merchants and those who lived in areas that brought them in contact with people from other areas, i.e. other disease environments, had regular exposure to these diseases, they had the highest levels of immunity and survival.

Trans-Sahara trade networks had linked the Mediterranean area with parts of the Sahel (Arabic word for coast or shore, i.e. southern edge of the Sahara Desert). In the 1440s, Portuguese sailors began to Africa prior to the Portuguese exploration along to the coast of Africa, varying degrees of immunity existed among **West Africans** in those zones they had contact with merchants and their hitch-hiking microbes. As a result, West Africans survivability was greater than Native Americans, but less than Europeans.

### 2. Tropical Diseases

The two most common and deadly tropical diseases are **falciparum malaria** and **yellow fever**. Both are endemic to tropical and semi-tropical old world regions, including West Africa, and transmitted by two different species of mosquitoes carried across the Atlantic in the same ships as the enslaved human cargo, becoming established in compatible western hemisphere environments. Their role as disease carriers or vectors was not known until after the slave trade had ended.

Although **yellow fever** has a low death rate when contracted by children, adult mortality is around 75%. **Falciparum malaria** is one of the leading disease causes of death to this day. Human populations living in malaria-infested regions have evolved a number of natural immunities. The best-known is the **sickle-cell gene**, whose frequency corresponds to the malarial regions of tropical and semi-tropical Africa. The selective advantage of the sickle-cell gene ensures its survival as the gene is passed on to offspring.

### 3. The Impact of Two Disease Pools on Three Population Groups in Two Tropical Zones

The different, specific immunities of these three population groups to these diseases and the resulting great differences in survival played a major role in West Africa becoming the primary source of slaves in the Americas. The death rates in the three different continental “disease environments” from which the population groups that came in contact with each other in the Americas are estimated to have been as follows (Because of high infant mortality rates in most traditional societies, mortality rates reports generally exclude children below the age of 2):

<u>Population Group</u>	<u>in Europe</u>	<u>in tropical Africa</u>	<u>in the tropical Americas</u>
Native Americans	-	-	over 50%
Europeans	1.25 – 2.5%	25 – 50%	12.5% to 25%
West Africans	-	1.5%	1.5 – 3%

Thus, the higher level of immunity of West African populations to shared Afro-Eurasian diseases, together with their much greater immunity to tropical diseases, resulted in a much higher survival rate than Europeans and, of course, Native Americans.

### C. **Ethnocentrism: Religion and Ethnicity, Key Factors in Distinguishing “Us” from “The Other”**

Ethnocentrism is common to all peoples of the world. It should not be confused with the later development of pseudo-scientific theories of race, which asserted the existence of superior and inferior races.

#### 1. **Religion: Christianity, Islam & Traditional Beliefs**

By the 1500’s, enslavement of fellow Christians in Europe had declined. Enslavement of Muslims by Christian conquerors alongside the enslavement of Christians by Muslim conquerors along the borderlands of the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions was largely free of such taboos and continued down through the 1800s.

15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Century European merchants venturing southward along the coast of West Africa, viewed the peoples they encountered as different and “heathen” (which meant “non-Christian” or “non-believer”). By the same token, the people along the African coast saw the newly arriving mariners and merchants as different and strange.

#### 2. **African Societies: Empires, Kingdoms, Tribes, Clans and “Stateless” Societies**

In an era when European city-states and principalities were being gradually consolidated into larger kingdoms and empires, a multiplicity of organized states, such as kingdoms, and “stateless” societies continued to exist side by side in most of Africa. Traditional tribal societies, usually subdivided into clans, continued to be the primary social organizations important to most people in Africa.

Each of these social arrangements was held together by group loyalty, which meant that non-members had lower status as “The Other.”

#### 3. **The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade versus the East African Slave Trade**

Virtually all of the slave merchants of middle passage across the Atlantic Ocean were from Christian European countries. The parallel East African slave trade, known as the Zanj, which began in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century CE, was controlled by Muslim merchants, most of which were from Oman. This trade was centered on the island of Zanzibar. Fewer than 10% of the people brought to the western hemisphere as slaves were from East Africa.

#### 4. Trade Languages: Pidgins and Creoles

Trade requires communication. Initial and infrequent contact gives rise to a pidgin language, a mixture of the two contact languages with a very simplified grammar structure, suffices for the limited vocabulary needed for conducting business. Over time, as contact increases and the influence of the trade affects more and more people, the language acquires more formal and consistent rules of grammar and the capacity to convey complex and abstract concepts.

In West Africa, the development of creoles varied not only with the indigenous languages, but also with the language of the European merchants, mainly Portuguese at first, then Dutch, English and French. Krio, one of the official languages of Sierra Leone, is one example. A better-known example is the East African language, Swahili (Ki-Swahili), a mixture of Arabic and indigenous languages that developed as the principal, regional commercial language or *lingua franca* of the East African slave trade.

#### D. Capture or Purchase: How Did Trans-Atlantic Merchants Acquire Slaves?

A combination of contradictory stereotypes of African people, European merchants and 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century firearms technology as well as general misunderstanding of West African coastal geography has complicated this question. The overwhelming majority of West African people transported across the Atlantic as slaves were purchased from local African, coastal merchants and from European coastal concessions or outposts. They were there by permission or by contractual agreement. Over time, many of them intermarried with indigenous people forming a new creolized population oriented toward the trade in slaves and other items of trade.

For several reasons the crews of a slave ship very rarely engaged in the direct capture and enslavement (kidnapping) of free individuals or groups of people in Africa. There are several reasons for this.

##### 1. Economic Reasons or How Merchants Conduct Business

Regardless of their ethnocentric views, European slave trade merchants understood they had to establish commercial relations with coastal merchants and the local political authorities that had the power to deny them access or even seize their cargo and crew.

Buying and selling establishes a commercial relationship that benefits both parties and contains within it the promise of future trade and profits. Both understand that the opportunity for future profits requires negotiation and bargaining, which forcible seizure precludes.

##### 2. Specific Problems With the “Capture by Slave Ship Crews” theory

###### a. Environmental: Diseases

Although their causes and transmission were not yet understood, tropical diseases, esp. malaria transmitted by the *anopheles* mosquito and yellow fever transmitted by the *aedes* mosquito were greatly feared. European travelers into tropical Africa suffered a very high death rate. Yellow fever is particularly deadly when caught after puberty. Prior to the availability of quinine (Peruvian bark) for the treatment of malaria in the early 1800's, European explorers avoided travel in tropical areas of Africa.

###### b. Geographical: West Africa's mostly unindented coastline and shallow continental shelf

The straight, relatively unindented coastline of West Africa between the Senegambia region, roughly 15 degrees north latitude, and Angola, roughly 15 degrees south latitude, offers very few natural harbors. Except for the Senegal and the Gambia Rivers, ocean-going sailing

ships were unable to sail very far inland on African rivers, since they are too shallow or blocked by rapids a few miles inland.

The gradual drop of the continental shelf off West Africa meant that ocean-going ships had to drop anchor at some distance off-shore. To move the people they purchased from shore to ship, the merchants of Middle Passage were dependent on the canoes, normally used by coastal fishermen or armed soldiers. The distance from the shore also meant that shipboard cannons, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> through early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were of limited value in exerting control over people on the beaches and beyond.

**c. Firearms Technology: Firearms were limited advantage to merchants in West Africa**

In the early years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, before the development of the sealed cartridge in the early 1800s, firearms were of limited value. When exposed to rain or humid conditions, gunpowder does not ignite, thus making firearms unreliable and creating no great advantage to their holder.

**e. Economic: Competition between European states and the trade in firearms**

The trans-Atlantic slave merchants came from many European countries, starting with Portugal, then Netherlands, France, England and others, including ports in New England, New York, Philadelphia and Alexandria, Virginia. Naturally, slave merchants based on the African coast saw the value in firearms as a trade item and rulers of coastal states and kingdoms wanted them for their potential political and military advantages. Competing for political favor and economic advantage, merchants from Europe included guns in their trade goods. The effect of firearms on the slave trade was to increase the power of the first-level, indigenous slave catchers rather than to slave catchers coming off ocean-going sailing ships.

**f. Misunderstandings of West African societies**

The belief that European/American slave merchants could just come ashore in West Africa presumes that the African societies were helpless and unable to defend themselves from these alien intruders. Clearly that was not the case.

**E. Sources on Slavery, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade & Slavery in Africa and the Americas**

Major sources were:

**African History** (1978) by Curtin, Feierman, Thompson and Vansina

**Slavery and Social Death** (1982) by Orlando Patterson

**The Slave Ship: A Human History** (2007) by Marcus Rediker

**The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History** (1990) by Philip Curtin

**Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800** (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1998) by John Thornton

**Slavery: A World History** (combined edition, 1993) by Milton Meltzer

Vol I: From the Rise of Western Civilization to the Renaissance (1971)

Vol II: From the Renaissance to Today (1972)

**African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean** (1986) by Herbert Klein

**The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe** (1992), Inikori & Engerman (editors)

Communications with Philip Curtin and other historians and anthropologists

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written comments on the proposed social studies standards. I am a DC area resident of two decades, youth worker, Georgetown professor of justice and peace studies, and co-founder of RestorativeDC. In the latter capacity, I have provided extensive onsite technical assistance to a dozen schools in southeast, northeast, and northwest, and coached and trained thousands of DC educators in restorative practices, trauma awareness, conflict resolution, and communication.

I strongly believe the ability to listen with intentionality and curiosity; consider multiple conflicting perspectives; access empathy for oneself and others; be aware of one's own and others emotions; express, process, and regulate emotions; reflect on one's biases and assumptions; acknowledge harm or mistakes one has done; and more generally build relationships, resolve conflict collaboratively, and work in groups are some of the most important skill sets for life and society. Parent and employer surveys tend to agree with this and the research on the academic performance, short- and long-term wellbeing, and financial benefits is robust. Consider this meta-study <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12864> or visit <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-does-the-research-say/> for an overview of the research. It is commendable that the anchor standards and Kindergarten and First Grade standards contain reference to these important skills and concepts. Unfortunately, they are absent in the grade-level standards beyond this. This is problematic because one only begins to develop social emotional skills in the early grades. Their full integration takes consistent reinforcement and elaboration through a child's developmental arc into early adulthood. OSSE, DCPS, and many charter schools are already committed to some combination of social emotional learning, mindfulness, restorative justice, peace education, nonviolent communication, conflict resolution, or peer mediation so standards in this spirit are more of an affirmation and encouragement, than an imposition. Having them be reflected in the standards, allows schools, school districts, and funders to more easily justify investing the needed resources for the needed staffing, programming, training, and infrastructure.

In addition to this, the standards do not address or under-emphasize some of the most pressing social challenges in public discourse that the next generation will inherit locally, nationally, or globally: racism, climate change, mass incarceration, gun violence, gender-based violence, pollution, biodiversity loss, nuclear proliferation, inequality, social fragmentation/polarization, radicalization, and the inequitable persistence of poor physical and mental health outcomes. Where they are mentioned, it is largely in a historical context. I would advocate for standards that encourage our schools to reflect on these issues as pose current challenges that touch each of us personally and warrant significant changes in our social, economic, and political policies and institutions.

Finally, I recommend there to be a standard explicitly promoting traditional and social media literacy. I imagine the reason for this is abundantly clear.

**Tarek Maassarani**

**Comments on the Draft Social Studies Standards**  
**Sally Schwartz, Globalize DC**  
**February 2023**

I am Executive Director of Globalize DC, a nonprofit that works to increase access for DC public school students (both DCPS and charter) to global education, language learning, and study abroad, in particular for those students most underserved in these areas. We work to leverage the unique wealth of global assets in this city to promote a systemic, strategic, and equitable approach to global education, and to move beyond “one off” opportunities to create pipelines for interested students to college and careers. Prior to my work with Globalize DC, I served as DCPS Director of International Programs, and in that role was involved in the drafting of the last set of social studies standards in 2006. Earlier in my career, I was a social studies teacher at Duke Ellington School of the Arts as part of its original faculty.

Globalize DC does most of its work with students in the out-of-school space, but there is no denying that what gets taught during the school day every day has the greatest impact on what students across the city learn. This is why we are very interested in the revision of these social studies standards and why we are extremely concerned about what currently appears to be a huge missed opportunity and failure to follow the Guiding Principles document approved by the DC State Board of Education (SBOE) in 2020.

I was pleased to serve on the SBOE’s Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee (SSSAC). While I supported the changes recommended by fellow committee members, my own primary interest was in ensuring that DC create a new set of standards that adopt a clear global approach, in line with the widely accepted *Educating for Global Competence* Framework first published in 2011 by the Asia Society and Council of Chief State School Officers. We were thrilled that the SSSAC and State Board agreed on the importance of this approach, and adopted the following Guiding Principle on global perspectives:

*All social studies content should be embedded within a global context. The revised D.C. Social Studies Standards should **include an explicit, ongoing thread** [my emphasis] that provides students with a global perspective and global context for their own lives, their history, and their society; that equips students with the content knowledge, skills, experiences, and mindsets that will help prepare them for careers and engaged citizenship in a culturally diverse and globally interconnected world; that explores not just comparisons but connections between peoples of the United States and the rest of the world, historically and in the present.*

So it has been with a huge sense of frustration to find that these draft standards have failed, intentionally or not, to follow this guidance and truly embed a global perspective across all grade levels. The document continues an outdated paradigm of studying the rest of the world as “other” or separate – and primarily confined to World History and Geography. I have heard Dr. Christina Grant, the State Superintendent, speak about her desire to develop the nation’s premier social studies standards document. I know how complex and difficult the task of rewriting social studies standards is, especially in our current political environment, but I can guarantee that as currently written, these draft standards do not meet that goal in regard to its treatment of global education or in laying a solid foundation for our students for informed global engagement and confident participation in the culturally diverse, globally interconnected, and frankly perilous world they will inherit.

There is much to like in these new draft standards, in particular to advance other guiding principles adopted by the State Board. The comments below focus specifically on serious deficits we have identified related to the draft standards’ approach to global content and skills.

## PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED IN NEW DRAFT SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

### 1. The draft standards do not have an identifiable global perspective as recommended in the Board's Guiding Principles. There is no explicit ongoing global thread.

Around the year 2000 the field of global education experienced a fundamental shift. Before that time K-12 students certainly learned about the world – primarily in world history and geography classes, or by discussing current events. But at the turn of the century, with increasing globalization, growing diversity in our communities and workplaces, and rapid technological advances (like the internet), a new model emerged – one designed to infuse global content and perspectives across disciplines, across grade levels, and for all students in all schools. It is no longer about “us” and “the rest of the world” -- “us” and “them.” We’re too interconnected. We’re all “us.” As Martin Luther King, Jr said, we live in a “World House.” We can’t understand our own history, our current predicament, or solve the world’s biggest problems unless we think and act globally. This new framework gained widespread currency in the decade following the release of the Asia Society and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) publication *Educating for Global Competence* (2011). This approach has been embraced and adapted by the US Department of Education; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which has developed an internationally administered global competence assessment; and most national organizations that work with educators and students in the global education space. This is the forward facing approach that the State Board of Education adopted when it called for an **explicit, ongoing thread** around global content and perspectives in its 2020 Guiding Principles resolution on the Social Studies Standards. It is extremely disappointing that OSSE chose not to do this, despite the fact that there are many standards with global content included.

Instead, the standards adopt an older paradigm. It includes global Anchor standards **within** the different disciplines – Geography (Global Interconnections), Government (World Government), Economics (The Global Economy). But this doesn’t do the job, and in fact complicates the structure by creating artificial divisions. How is the global economy really separate from the US economy? Is “World Government” the only prism through which students can look at government, democracy, human rights, and political systems? This approach is too confining and misses the need to apply a global lens through all grade bands K-12.

On the other hand, the draft’s Inquiry Arc Anchor Standards align neatly with the four domains of the *Educating for Global Competence* Framework:

- Developing Questions and Designing Inquiry/*Investigate the World*
- Gathering Diverse Perspectives and Evaluating Evidence/*Recognize Perspectives*
- Developing Claims and Using Evidence to Engage in Civil Discourse/*Communicate Ideas*
- Engaging in Civil Discourse and Taking Informed Action/*Take Action*

But as currently written there is no embedded global strand and no imperative to adopt a global perspective or apply skills in global and culturally diverse contexts.

In its recent update to the State Board, dated Jan 27, 2023, OSSE identifies eleven (11) “major shifts in the standards,” listed on page 15 – adding an explicit, ongoing global thread is not among these. And there is no explanation offered regarding why this guideline has not been followed.

We recommend Global Perspectives be added as another Inquiry Arc Anchor Standard to address this deficit. Or perhaps OSSE has different thoughts about how to do this – perhaps as an essential question (which some state standards include).

Please also reference comments from Prof. Laura Engel, submitted to OSSE separately.

## **2. The draft suffers from serious inconsistency across grade levels and courses in terms of the specificity of content.**

Some standards are very specific and narrowly drawn; others (particularly in world history and geography) are overly broad and generic. In these cases, in an attempt to have fewer and higher standards, clarity has been sacrificed. If the standards were equally general across grade bands or subjects that would be one issue, but the fact that some content is treated with tremendous specificity and others in overly general terms appears to be a reflection of their relative importance to the standards writers, and we argue that global themes and content knowledge needs to be as thoughtfully and specifically written as US-focused standards. Look at examples (among many) of specific standards – for 5<sup>th</sup> grade:

- 5.Inq.ID.44 Using primary sources from the perspective of American citizens of Japanese descent, analyze the struggles and resistance of those who were incarcerated during World War II.
- 5.HSC.HC.49 Evaluate the reasons for and resistance to segregation in the North, including the impact of redlining and uprisings in the North and West.
- 5.Econ.US.50 Evaluate the impact of key moments and figures in the fight for Black equality and voting rights including, but not limited to, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Freedom Rides, sit-in protests, the Little Rock Nine, and the March on Washington.

And then these, that are more general, vague, and unrealistic (among many) – for 6<sup>th</sup> graders:

- 6.Geo.HP.33 Assess the political, economic, and social impact of migration of people within, from, and to regions of Asia over time.
- 6.Geo.HE.35 Assess how the environmental characteristics of Asia influenced the economic development of different regions within Asia and the region's role in global trade patterns over time.
- 6.Geo.HP.35 Analyze Asian cultural contributions to global culture, including art, literature, music, dance, cuisine, philosophy, religious or political thought.

Another way to look at the problem: Here are some of the terms that receive no explicit mention in the standards: China (except in ancient history), Israel and Palestine, South African apartheid, jihadism, the Vietnam War, genocide in Rwanda and in Cambodia, the partition of India, 9-11, Iraq (except in ancient history), Afghanistan, the EU, COVID, mention of any specific South American, Central American, or African countries (except in reference to ancient history).

We know that a good teacher with a global orientation, or a modern understanding of education for global competence, can find ways to teach about the world using these (or really almost any) standards. But standards are created to make the hard decisions about what content needs to be taught, and we believe that there is content related to world affairs and world history that is important enough to receive explicit mention (just as we find to a much greater extent in the draft US history and civics courses).

## **3. Culture is not adequately addressed.**

Learning about culture – what it is; the diversity of world cultures, world views, and ways of being in the world; the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural differences; how to communicate and work collaboratively across cultures; how to resolve cross-cultural conflict; the ways in which culture is transmitted, transformed, and connected to our history, our political and economic systems; and the

idea that cultures are not fixed, but fluid and change over time. Cultural competence is essential to educating for global competence. Yet a serious approach to the understanding of culture, even as it relates to “identity,” one of the inquiry standards, is missing. The removal of “culture” from the title and contents of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade standards, formerly “World Geography and Culture” and now simply “World Geography,” is perplexing. Perhaps the writers think of culture as food, festivals, and fashion, and have dismissed it as superficial. Without an opportunity to engage with OSSE, it’s difficult to understand the rationale.

With more attention to culture, students could explore more deeply the variation of African cultures in the Americas and the diaspora more broadly; could likewise examine the diversity of Asian and Latin American cultures; intergenerational culture and culture conflict within immigrant families; frontier cultures; culture as a form of social and political control, as well as resistance and resilience; and so on.

#### **4. We appear to devote much greater attention (and standards) to ancient history as compared to recent history.**

I think this needs another look and some recalibration. Contemporary history and current global issues too often get short shrift in social studies classrooms. In the case of these draft standards, with the addition of significant new and sometimes repetitious content on indigenous societies and ancient civilizations, attention to more current history and global issues is extremely weak and only addressed in the most generic ways.

Grade 2 – Ancient history

Grade 3 – Expanded Indigenous history in DC history

Grade 4 – Expanded Indigenous history in US history

Grade 6 – Geography (modern)

Grade 7 – Indigenous history in US history

Grade 8 – Only minimal incorporation of global content in Action Civics

World History I – Focus on ancient and early modern empires

World History II – From 1450-present

Government and Civics – Almost no global content

The two courses that deal specifically with civic engagement pay only marginal attention to global themes and issues. If the OSSE writing team had in fact adopted an ongoing global thread across the grade bands, inquiry, and anchor standards, then teaching global content and global competencies can more easily and appropriately be addressed. It’s clear that time to examine contemporary world issues and recent history is seriously shortchanged at a time when the imperative for students to understand the world and develop global competencies is high.

In its January 27 update, OSSE explains that its focus on ancient history in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is “so students encounter powerful, robust histories of people of color before encountering people of color through lenses of slavery, colonization, and oppression.” At the same time we want to be sure our students’ understanding of Mexico is not confined to the Aztecs or Africa to ancient Mali or ancient Egypt. Too often students, as a result of this kind of teaching, identify countries in other parts of the world with the past. Realistic and positive contemporary views of these parts of the world – their leaders, activists, artists, their economies, social challenges and innovations, their everyday people – are also part of the solution and essential to providing powerful and fully human portrayals of people previously seen only through these negative dehumanizing lenses.

## **5. Violence, peace, and conflict resolution.**

As a member of the SSSAC, I don't recall any significant discussion about the importance of including content and skills in the social studies standards related to war and peace, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peer mediation, truth and reconciliation. We recommend finding a way of incorporating some standards along these lines, which have relevance at the personal, local, national, and international levels. Students must understand the fault lines of race, ethnicity, culture, caste, religion, gender, politics, etc., and how divisions are created, exploited, manipulated, through stereotyping, scapegoating, dehumanization, etc, leading to conflict, exploitation, violence, genocide, and war. Much of this content and skills development would be appropriate for a reimagined World Geography and Cultures course at Grade 6, discussed in #7 below.

Please also reference comments from Tarek Maassarani to OSSE, submitted separately.

## **6. A global lens could and should be incorporated in the earliest grades.**

Integrating a global perspective would ensure that elementary students think and act globally from an early age. From the earliest age, students should see themselves as members of a large global community. At present, this is not the case. For example, look at the K-2 Arc. In grades K-1, students learn about their "community" – Kindergarten (Myself and My Community) and Grade 1 (Working and Building Together). Grade 2 (This Wide World) focuses entirely on ancient history, not the contemporary world, with the exception of consideration of environmental change. Rather than setting up this unfortunate duality seeing ourselves in the present and the rest of the world through a historic lens, the standards should apply a global lens from the beginning.

For example, in Kindergarten, the standards should explicitly call on teachers to draw on examples from the global community in standards like these:

- K.Civ.CE.4. Identify examples of fictional characters, historical or living individuals whose actions showed the principles of justice and respect for diverse members of a community . . .
- K.Hist.HC.6. Identify individuals (historical or present-day) whose actions made the community more just . . .

## **7. The Grade 6 standards are extremely problematic, and in my view require a complete rewrite.**

"Culture" has been removed from the title of this course and it should be restored. Beyond this, both the structure and content are not well developed and try to cover far too much material. Long lists of generic standards are applied to each geographic region separately (much appears to be cut and pasted), supplemented by a list of equally broad geography standards and a deep dive into the Sustainable Developments Goals. What is a teacher expected to do here?

The current World Geography and Cultures course was conceived in the 2006 standards as a year for students to apply physical and cultural geography skills and perspectives to investigate the world. The wealth of grade-appropriate educational materials from National Geographic, Peace Corps, educational and cultural institutions, along with partnership with global entities based in DC, made this a fun year for teachers and students, with ample opportunity for direct exposure and project-based learning. DCPS's Embassy Adoption Program and Model UN were also open to 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at that time. Now virtual exchanges allow students to not only learn **about** the world, but **with** the world (the tagline for one such organization, iEARN). Students can engage online with their peers in countries around the world. This is also a place where cross-cultural conflict resolution and peacebuilding work can be done (as discussed in #5 above). This could be such a wonderful year for students, with deep exposure to the world and skills development for global competence. At present the standards are overly broad and unrealistic.

## **8. Africa is missing from American History**

Across multiple grade bands that focus on early American history, there still seems to be only minimal attention devoted to learning about those African societies and cultures from which enslaved Africans were kidnapped during the transatlantic trade. I only found:

- In Grade 4: 4.Inq.ID.33. Examine the diverse histories of people who were kidnapped from Western Africa (i.e., enslaved people were not a monolith, they represented a diverse group of people who spoke numerous languages, embodied various belief systems, etc.).
- In Grade 7: 7.Inq.ID.20 Investigate the experience, perspectives, and identities of Africans who were enslaved from the start of the transatlantic trade through bondage, including the codification of race as a tool of oppression and resistance to enslavement.

With so many standards devoted to a deep dive into indigenous societies (and appropriately so), it is imperative that the story of Black Americans not start with enslavement, but with an understanding of what was happening in Africa in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and what Africans brought with them to the Americas. Standards focused on the countries of origin of the European colonists is almost as thin, beyond examining the imperialist/colonizing impulse, but not as urgent as the need to add more content for a fuller story of Africans who came to the Americas.

I also have a question about the undefined “identity” inquiry standard. Why is an identity inquiry applied to some history – and a history or other anchor standard applied in others?

## **9. World History II adopts a very constraining Eurocentric approach.**

I realize the intent is to de-center Europe and the West in world history, while more fully and honestly exploring the negative impacts of Western expansionism, imperialism, colonialism, and exploitation. But this course ends up being extremely Eurocentric in its design. I know others have noticed and pointed this out as well. There appears to be so much history left out or left to the discretion of the teacher or curriculum writer. I wonder what students will actually learn about South America, Africa, Asia, Europe (for that matter) beyond the Western expansionist, imperialist framing of the course. This is important content but it is also vital for students to understand that other countries have their own histories, complexities, and agency.

## **10. Grade 8 Action Civics should be global. It is not now.**

The standards for this grade band are probably the clearest evidence of what is wrong with this draft, and the ways in which it does not apply the explicit ongoing global lens to the content that the Board recommended, with a focus on interconnections as well as comparisons. Rather, the standards adopt in my view a 20<sup>th</sup> century framing of global education. For each Driving Concept, one standard, identified as a “Civics: World Governments” Anchor Standard, is included – calling on students to compare a topic across three different nations, i.e., comparing ideas for the purpose of government and the role of the people; government structures; and rights of citizens. There are a few additional standards that require students to look at international alliances (I believe this is the only place in the standards where the UN, NATO, the IMF are mentioned), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and citizen protest globally. Then there are a few standards that call on students to construct an action proposal around a local, national, OR international issue. As Professor Laura Engel, who separately submitted her comments, has earlier pointed out, it is more appropriate to address the interconnectedness of an issue in its local, national, AND international contexts – as opposed to one or the other.

### **11. US Government should be global. It is not now.**

These standards have no global content – either in the narrative at the front of the standards or in the standards themselves, except for these two standards:

- GC.Inq.TA.26. Use research from national and international sources to analyze the impact of media and social media on democracy and develop a public policy proposal to strengthen democratic expression and participation in American civil life.
- GC.Civ.LP.38. Evaluate the extent to which different groups of Americans impact domestic and foreign policy, and identify the reasons and consequences of the disparity in influence.

There is no discussion of the US government’s foreign policy apparatus or how foreign policy, embassies, foreign aid and investment, international monetary and trade policy, human rights, peacebuilding and diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, immigration policy, etc. work. There is no discussion of the military, national security, defense alliances and international treaties. There really is very little on the Executive Branch in general. There is nothing here on the tremendous influence of American democratic ideals on the rest of the world, and the many global connections around democracy, protests, and civil society (amplified through technology and social media). Likewise, there isn’t much attention to transnational linkages, based on historical connections (especially immigrants) and identity, and the ways they can be exercised to influence foreign policy or weaponized to suspect citizens of dual allegiances (as with Muslim Americans, American Jews, and Asian Americans).

Once again, this appears to be a very parochial approach to American government and inadequate in terms of helping students “develop the foundation of skills and dispositions to enable students to participate effectively and strategically in civic life.”

### **12. DC’s cultural diversity, global resources, and our local career landscape**

This is Washington, DC and our standards should reflect the particularities of this city, and take advantage of its unique assets. We should be mindful of the resources at hand that can provide curriculum, professional development, field trip and enrichment activities for students. DC also is rich with career opportunities in government, cultural studies, and global fields of all kinds. Our social studies standards should be written in recognition of this fact. We alone in the US have the ability to directly expose our students to the levers of power on the local, state, national, and international stage, as well as to policymakers, activists, influence makers, and creatives from all over the world. Our standards should not look like any other state standards.

Even in writing the standards, we need to think hard about how our many students who do not attend school with diverse student populations can gain knowledge, experience, and cultural competencies through direct interaction, discussion, and collaboration with students with different backgrounds and identities. At present, students who attend culturally and linguistically diverse schools are privileged in this regard. We need to be sure that even those who don’t have such diversity within their school communities and neighborhoods still have the ability to benefit from deep interactions with peers and adults from a variety of national and cultural backgrounds.

### **13. Some concepts need further definition.**

“**Identity**” needs to be defined. It does not appear to be analogous to other inquiry arc standards.

“**Indigenous**” applied globally is problematic and confusing. As in:

- 6.Hist.DHC.15 Use primary and secondary sources to evaluate the role of Indigenous people in the historic and contemporary development of Africa.
- 6.Hist.CCC.28 Use primary and secondary sources to evaluate the historic and contemporary role of Indigenous people in the development of Asia.

I believe this is asking for students to understand the role of Africans or Asians, as opposed to settlers or colonizers, in the development of Africa and Asia respectively. If so, the standard is way too broad to be meaningful. If “indigenous” has some other meaning, it should be explained. Likewise other terms used which come out of the US context (BIPOC and people of color) don’t have the same meaning in an a different global context.

The term “**contributions to global culture,**” or “**global culture**” needs to be explained. Our students should be able to learn about and appreciate the variety of world cultures for their own sakes, rather than as contributions to some unified global culture (if in fact this is what this term is supposed to mean).

References:

<https://asiasociety.org/education/educating-global-competence-preparing-our-youth-engage-world-1st-edition>

<https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

**DC Social Studies Standards Draft Review  
by Globalize DC #Stop Asian Hate Project**

**February 1, 2023**

In 2021, early in the DC social studies standards revision process, students from Globalize DC testified before the DC State Board of Education to demand that the standards be more inclusive of Asians and Asian Americans. We advocated for standards that include more AAPI and Asian culture, start introducing AAPI content in earlier grades, and include plans for directly exposing students to AAPI people and culture through activities like field trips. However, in looking over the current draft of the standards, we’ve realized that none of our recommendations were followed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and in many ways the standards have regressed in their inclusion of Asians and Asian Americans. This document summarizes our complaints and observations.

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<p><b>WE NEED MORE SPECIFICITY:</b> We wanted more information on Asia and Asian Americans than in the 2006 version of the standards. We don’t feel the revised standards do this. There are too many broad and vague standards encompassing too much information when it comes to Asians and Asian Americans. The few standards that explicitly mention Asia are extremely political and don’t mention other aspects of Asian or Asian American society.</p>	<p>In order to gain an understanding of the diversity of Asian and Asian American history and culture, there needs to be more specific information on Asia and Asian American culture and history included in the standards. We suggested including information on Asian Americans and their communities in DC as well as the US, rather than only including information on Asian history. Government &amp; Civics Standard 32, which mentions <i>Korematsu v. United States</i>, is the only standard that specifically mentions an Asian American. Other explicit mentions were on ancient China, Asia’s involvement in wars, Chinese immigrants coming to the US, and Japanese Americans being incarcerated in World War II. Instead of specific references, here’s one example of the many very broad, general standards that include Asia: World History I. Standard 23. “Compare the emergence of empires across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, including their methods of consolidating and maintaining power.”</p>
<p><b>WE NEED MORE ASIA/AAPI CONTENT IN EARLIER GRADES:</b> Our first recommendation was to see Asia and Asian Americans included from the earliest grades. We believe that showing films and reading books with Asian/AAPI representation at young ages will help dispel or prevent stereotypes.</p>	<p>Asia is explicitly mentioned for the first time in the second grade standards with a focus on ancient Chinese history, and then Asia/Asian Americans are mentioned later in some American history standards in grade 5.</p>

<p><b>WE NEED MORE COUNTRIES:</b>          We want to see more Asian countries and ethnicities included in the standards. Many Asian countries are not explicitly mentioned in the standards. Most explicit references are to China, Japan, and India, with a few mentions of Korea. This ignores the great array of Asian and AAPI cultures and histories that have evolved on the continent, contributing to the notion that Asian civilizations are a monolith.</p>	<p>These standards did not reference specific countries and empires but rather labeled them as “Asia.” It is important for students to gain an understanding and have an appreciation for the diversity of Asian and Asian American peoples and cultures. We know that treating Asia and Asian Americans as a monolith contributes to stereotyping and bigotry. We believe it’s important to include references to specific countries or regions that might be neglected if they aren’t explicitly mentioned. Also we know that representation in the standards is important for students traditionally marginalized. For example, the only mention of Vietnam is in reference to anti-Vietnam war protests in the US. Especially because students from Vietnam represent a significant part of DC’s AAPI school population, more about Vietnam – its history and culture – should be seen in the standards. The same can be said about the Philippines, which are only in the standards as victims of US imperialism.</p>
<p><b>WE NEED MORE CULTURE:</b>          There was a lack of standards that mentioned Asian and AAPI culture. The few standards that explicitly mention Asia are extremely political or geographic and they don’t mention other aspects of Asian societies. We want to see more culture references to Asia as well as Asian Americans.</p>	<p>The inclusion of Asian and AAPI culture is intended to reduce hatred and prejudice against Asians. Teaching more about Asian culture and diversity helps students comprehend and empathize with Asians/AAPI individuals and communities. When it comes to Asian culture, the standards are vague, as in World History 1 Standard 33, which asks students to assess the role of culture in Asian government. None of these standards go far enough to ensure that students receive a thorough education in important aspects of Asian and AAPI culture. Students would better understand the diversity of their communities if they were exposed to Asian and AAPI culture more frequently and at a younger age. Students should examine different Asian/Asian American art, languages, religion, myths, social systems and norms.</p>
<p><b>WE NEED A LESS EUROCENTRIC APPROACH:</b>          The standards mainly focus on Western influence across the world, including Asia, especially in World History II. The standards for World History II call for students to evaluate, explain, and assess the Europeans’ political, cultural, social, and economic influence on Asia and other countries. These standards do not represent</p>	<p>In our original recommendations, we noted that most of what we learned about Asia was in relation to US history (such as through wars), and we called for more content that was independent of US history. The new draft standards do not solve this problem. In particular, the World History II standards are too focused on European imperialism in Africa and Asia. World History II standard 5 states “Explain the historical context of Eurocentrism and the lasting social, political, and economic impacts on countries [such as] Asia.” This sets up the rest of the standards which focus on Europe’s involvement in the world. Although Europe and the US have influenced the rest of world, Asian nations, empires, and people have their own histories, traditions, and modern conditions that need to be studied, understood, and respected – not just as byproducts of Western influence.</p>

<p>Asia as a continent with its own history but rather a continent that has thrived or suffered because of Europe.</p>	
<p><b>WE NEED MORE DIRECT EXPOSURE TO ASIAN/AAPI PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES, AND STORIES</b>          We suggested that the revised standards should go beyond the focus on wars, governments, and political leaders of the past to actually expose DC students to Asians/AAPI people in communities today. But there are no mentions of these kind of standards as with the older version. We asked for more exposure, but there is less.</p>	<p>In the 2006 version, Grade 3 standards stated that local major monuments and historical sites should be recognized, such as the Vietnam Veterans and the Iwo Jima Memorials, as well as discussing the various communities in DC, such as Chinatown. But the only specific new standard that mentioned different communities was standard 33 in DC History and Government, which mentions Chinatown as an option. We are looking for more opportunities for DC students to meet with AAPI and Asian community members and experience Asian/AAPI culture and history through field trips and other programs.</p>

Contacts:

Chamiya Carnathan, Student, School Without Walls, [cccarnathan@gmail.com](mailto:cccarnathan@gmail.com)  
 Penelope Morris, Student School Without Walls, [penelope.morris18@gmail.com](mailto:penelope.morris18@gmail.com)

RE: Proposed DC Social Studies Standards  
FR: Ruth Wattenberg  
DA: Feb 10, 2023

Thank you for this chance to offer comments on the proposed social studies standards. My comments are largely critical. So before starting, I want to convey my strongest appreciation for the work that has gone into this. Writing good standards is hard and often thankless work. Thank you!

I'm reviewing these standards in part through my eyes as a recent Member of the SBOE who has followed this process since it was initiated. In addition, I have followed and reviewed standards, especially in social studies, for over two decades. I know that when adopted, DC's current social studies standards were among the country's very best. They were well-regarded for their coherence and their strong content. They have not been reviewed or revised in 16 years; the world has changed and new scholarship, especially around race and Reconstruction, has entered the mainstream. It was time for them to be updated—*but not thrown out*. In multiple statements, SBOE members called for these strong standards to be "revised," not replaced. The Social Studies Standards Advisory committee called for the standards to be *revised rather than wholly re-written*."

"The D.C. Social Studies Standards must contain content that equips all students with the foundational historical knowledge--of chronology, pivotal events, leading figures, and seminal documents--that "well-educated American students" ought to know and be able to incorporate into their discourse and argument. The current D.C. standards<sup>1</sup> have been highly regarded for their clarity about such content and, thus, the **D.C. State Board of Education (SBOE) and its Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee (SSSAC)<sup>2</sup> recommend that the current standards be revised rather than wholly re-written.**"

Much effort and many problems could have been avoided had this approach been honored. Instead, the current standards were thrown out. They were replaced by standards that are often extremely broad, vague, over-ambitious, and lacking specific knowledge. (e.g., "Analyze the role of religion, belief, systems, and culture in the governments and maintenance of societies in Africa, Asia and Europe.")<sup>1</sup> They are less coherent than what they propose to replace and, relatedly, less disciplined in following key themes across time periods and standards.

Apart from the general concern above, my comments are focused on the world history/civilizations content that is lost and on the extent to which these standards are likely to convey to students an appreciation of democracy – an understanding of its values and principles, the gap between these values and American realities, and what it has taken from all Americans, most centrally African-Americans, to create a democracy that while still flawed is multicultural and multiracial. As our [SBOE resolution](#) on these standards states, the Board believes that it is vital that these standards include ongoing, explicit threads aimed at developing student understanding of

- "key principles of democratic society...."

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<sup>1</sup> (WH1 standards, #33)

- the central role of African Americans in the “growth and evolution of legal equality and democratic rights and the creation of a multicultural, democratic society”
- “the continuing tension in American history between the promise of democracy and equality in the founding documents and the reality of inequality,”
- “how these principles and human rights have evolved in the United States over time,” and
- Providing “students with a global perspective and global context.”

Of special interest, given current concerns about democracy today, the Board’s statement explicitly calls for conveying in these threads “the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society,” “how democracy differs” from other governments, its “fragility” and “how democratic societies have failed in the past.”

Because this is the focus, **my comments are focused on the 4 years of secondary American and World History.** While information on how our democracy functions and skills for participation are contained in other courses (Civics and Government; and Action Civics), it’s in history where students get the context to understand “why” democracy is important and what it has taken to build the democracy we have. Before getting into the two sets of standards, I want to reiterate my concern with the vagueness of the standards.

### **Lack of clear, specific knowledge**

Both sets of standards (and most of the standards in other courses), but especially the World History standards, suffer from being over-general and therefore vague. The public policy goal of standards is to assure that across schools, certain content and skills are taught to all. A key stated goal of the standards themselves is to promote critical thinking. But critical thinking—*any* kind of thinking—depends on knowing relevant content. These proposed standards regularly ask students to “assess,” “evaluate,” and otherwise think about the course material, but they often fail to provide the content needed to answer them. Finally, there is increased understanding that reading proficiency depends on broad background knowledge. But these very general standards provide very limited guidance on the knowledge students need.

This is not a call for a narrow “memorization of facts” but to provide students the content they need for strong reading comprehension and the grist that underlies critical thinking. The current standards, while needing updates in some sections, do a far, far better job than the proposed standards in making clear what students need to learn at different grade levels and how it all fits together. In some cases below, I’ve included comparisons with the current standards to make clear just how much has been dropped out.

### **I. What’s Missing from World History standards?**

**A huge strength of the previous standards was their strong treatment of the world.** Students were introduced over 3 years to key civilizations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and pre-Columbian societies in this hemisphere. Students gained perspective on different cultures—to their history and culture, their varying approaches to governance and diversity, their strengths, weaknesses, and achievements. Through this study, students gained a global perspective, including on how societies change over time, what’s common across humanity, and what’s different across cultures.

***That content is gone. Students lose a full year of secondary world history. Instead of the current three years of post-elementary world history, they would get just two.*** At the same time, perhaps to accommodate the reduced time, these proposed standards are far more general than the standards they propose to replace. A great deal gets lost, on both diverse cultures and the context for democracy. **Hardly a single standard in the 2-yr sequence names a specific non-western culture or civilization.** Specifically,

***In the proposed WH1 standards (<8000BCE-1600CE):***

**1. There is no in-depth look at the history, culture, experience of any specific country or civilization.** Every standard that speaks to the history, culture, or experience of a country/region/civilization is now handled as part of a generalized group. **Guidance to teach Chinese civilization is gone. Mesopotamia is gone. Ancient Greece is gone. Islamic civilization is gone. Medieval Japan and the Ottomans are gone. The rise of the great religions is gone. The Olmecs in MesoAmerica are gone. The sub-Saharan civilizations of the Middle Ages of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai are gone.**

A typical standard--this one (Wh1#22) for the 1500 years from 800 BCE to 700 CE -- reads: "Assess the importance and enduring legacy of major governmental, technological, and cultural achievements of ancient empires in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa." The intro to each section (the "Driving Concept") lists 10-19 different civilizations that could be highlighted but no guidance for what should be highlighted or why. There's no way such overly ambitious standards can lead all students to learn what's most vital.

***In contrast, current standards*** expose students to **unique, relevant aspects of each of the key civilizations above from across the world and centuries**, giving students a genuine appreciation of different cultures and a perspective on our own culture. These proposed standards are thin gruel in comparison.

***In the proposed WH2 standards (1450-current):***

**2. Virtually all learning about the non-European world is in the context of Europe.** As a witness explained at the SBOE public meeting, these standards are Eurocentric, with virtually the only discussion of non-European countries being in the context of their interaction with Europe or the US. There's **no discussion of any non-European entity prior to their encounter with European exploration/ imperialism/colonization—no history, no art, no governance, nothing about their achievements or failures, connections to or impact on their neighbors.**

***a. Of the 29 WH2 standards covering 1450-1900,***

**\*\*Just 1 standard (#2) is mainly about one or more specific non-European entities** (about how the spread of knowledge "from Islamic and Asian societies promoted maritime exploration and ultimately the expansion of empires.").

**\*\*Just 1 (#9) references any non-western country/region/civilization outside the context of colonialism/imperialism** ("Evaluate the environmental and cultural impact of the exchange of food, crops, trade goods, diseases, and ideas between Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.")

***b. Of the 42 WH2 standards covering 1900-present,***

**\*\*Just 3 are focused explicitly on non-European countries.** This period mainly addresses the various causes and consequences of WW 1 and 2, decolonization, and growing global issues, with countries addressed in that context.

**In contrast, the current standards** that cover 1450-1900 include standards on the Ottomans, the Maya, Inca, and Aztecs, developments on the Indian subcontinent, and Islamic, Chinese, and Japanese civilizations. In the post-1900 period, they address developments in Japan, China, the Philippines (including US involvement, which absent here, though it is addressed in US History), land reform in Central America, and more.

**3. Likewise, the primary discussion of Europe or any European country before WW1 is in the context of their role in imperialism/colonization/Eurocentrism,** as though they too have no relevant history or culture before this period. Of the 29 WH standards covering 1450-1900: 13 reference the role of Europe imperialism, colonialism, or racism<sup>2</sup>; 4<sup>3</sup> are about the impact of (presumably European/American) industrialization; 2 are primarily about Europe (both are about the Enlightenment one of which also references colonization)<sup>4</sup>

**4. The proposed standards totally neglect the history and development of democratic ideas and practice, leaving students without an understanding of what drove the early development of democracy or its values.**

**There are just two mentions of democracy or democratic in the two years of world history standards.** One is in the introduction to the *Driving Concept* on “Revolutions (1750-1900), preceding the several standards (above) on the Enlightenment. The other is Standard #46, asking students to “Compare the ideologies of socialism, communism, fascism, and liberal democracy” (though they have barely been exposed seriously to any of them). There is little to no context explaining the rise of democracy or its ideas.

**In contrast, the current standards,** in their study of Athens and the Roman Republic, students are introduced to such democratic ideas and practices as “direct democracy v. representative democracy,” the separation of powers, and rule of law. They can follow the fall of these early democratic efforts and the rise of different elements of democratic government in Medieval England (e.g., trial by jury, independent judiciary, parliament), early ideas that fed democracy (e.g., natural law, Montesquieu). As part of such study, students can begin to grasp the “brutish” world that democrats hoped to escape, start to learn the vocabulary of democracy, become familiar with key democratic ideas and principles. As importantly, this history gives **students the context to see that democratic, representative government is not a “given”; it entered history late, failed, disappeared, and has been slowly evolved into something more democratic, representative, and free.**

**5. The proposed WH2 standards do not expose students to democracy’s alternatives.** It is often said that “democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.” Especially now, with democracy under challenge, students should know the grim alternatives. Minimally, students should be exposed to totalitarianism--particularly the most devastating ones of the last century, Nazism, fascism and Soviet-style communism—and authoritarianism and what their impact has been on human rights, national minorities, and the world. These standards do not.

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<sup>2</sup> WH2 #s 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29

<sup>3</sup> #s19-21, 24

<sup>4</sup> 14, 15

## Across WH2,

1 standard mentions **totalitarianism**: “Analyze how totalitarian leaders came to power after World War I.” WH2 #41

0 standards mentions **Nazi, Nazism, Hitler, Franco, or Mussolini**<sup>5</sup>

1 standard mentions **fascism**.<sup>6</sup> It’s a useful but anodyne call to “compare the ideologies of socialism, communism, fascism, and liberal democracy.” (#46)

2 standards mention communism, the same (#46) above and one that mentions communism as a result of industrialization/capitalism.<sup>7</sup>

2 standards mention the **Holocaust**--#35, as one of several “violations of human rights” during WW1 and 2, and #43 which is solely focused on it.<sup>8</sup>

0 standards mention **Stalin, the purges, gulag, the famine, Mao, or the Cultural Revolution**

0 standards mention **dictator, dictatorship, authoritarian, or authoritarianism** nor is any country described that way. As noted in public testimony, there’s no discussion of current (or long-standing) repressive governments in Iran, North Korea, anywhere in Latin America, Africa, or Asia—in other words, nowhere. (There is this: WH#53 Compare the governments formed after World War II in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.)

**In contrast, the current WH standards** address these types of governments and rulers in multiple standards, (10.6) on “the rise of fascism and totalitarianism after World War 1,” and 4 sub-standards, including on “Stalin’s rise to power... the absence of a free press, and systemic violations of human rights (e.g., The Terror Famine in Ukraine)”; “the assumption of power by Adolf Hitler... and the human costs of the totalitarian regime”; and Mussolini’s “rise to power in Italy and his creation of a fascist state through the use of state terror and propaganda.” Other standards and sub-standards include 4 that mention Hitler, a particularly substantive one on the Holocaust (#10.5), the rise to power of Mao, and the rise of military dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil and Guatemala (#10.14.4). In short, students exposed to the current standards will be exposed to the horrors of totalitarian and authoritarian governments.

**6. The post-WW2 and contemporary struggle for independent, democratic government around the world is ignored.** After World War 2, the proposed standards have a section on “Decolonization and Nation-building (1945-Present)” and another on “Globalization and Changing Environment.” This period of time was indeed an era of decolonization and nation building. As important, and central for the past two decades, is the struggle for democracy across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe. But this goes entirely unnoted. Further, and to re-emphasize, these WH standards are very general, with no individual country mentioned in this section. Africa, Latin American, and Asia (and the Caribbean once) are mentioned together in several standards.

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<sup>5</sup> One secondary US History standard #39 also mentions fascism, Nazism, Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. “Evaluate the reasons for the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe and the scapegoating of historically marginalized peoples (including Jewish, Romani, Slavic, disabled, and LGBTQ+ communities) by Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco.”)

<sup>6</sup> The same US history standard #39 mentions fascism

<sup>7</sup> Several standards address the Soviet Union, but not the nature of Soviet/communist government; they address the impact of industrialization on the creation of the Soviet Union, Cold War “rivalry” with the US and collapse of the Soviet Union).

<sup>8</sup>In secondary US History, standard #41 mentions the Holocaust. “Assess the United States’ global commitment to universal human rights before, during, and after World War II, including but not limited to its role during the Holocaust and incarceration of Japanese Americans.”

**In contrast, the current standards’ make the effort to stand up democratic governments a key part of their final sections.** In addition to the much broader coverage of the non-western world in this period, as noted above, these standards specifically ask students to “outline important trends in [Africa] today with respect to individual freedom and democracy,” include standards that reference Tiananmen Square, the creation of a non-apartheid democracy in South Africa, and earlier efforts in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to resist or reform communism, including and notables in these fights including Mandela, Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, and Walesa.

## II. American History standards

**The evolution of American democracy should be a central thread in these standards.**

America is generally regarded today, with all its flaws, as the world’s oldest, largest, most diverse, representative democracy. But at its founding, while the world’s most representative democracy at the time—*the only people represented were white, propertied males.*

Students need to understand this evolution. It is fundamental to educating future citizens. Our standards must convey this story. Our standards must convey, so that our students can come to know and understand: our founding ideals; the gap between those ideals and reality; the fight to realize those ideals over time—largely driven by the long struggle to end slavery and enact civil rights for African Americans; what it took to make these changes; what remains undone; and our connection to and the health of democracy in the world. **While some key events and ideas are mentioned in these standards, there is no coherent, central thread that tracks this evolution or adequately conveys its importance.** Below are five examples; of this; there could be more.

*I urge you to engage with historians and others with expertise on the new scholarship around Reconstruction and the role of race and on what it has taken for democracy to expand over the years in this country and others.*

### 1. The principles, values, and context of the founding documents.

**On the plus side,** the proposed standards include standards on the key founding documents and their ideas—the Declaration, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. And, more so and **more explicitly than the current standards, they helpfully ask students to consider the compromises that were included in the Constitution, especially around slavery;** whether the Bill of Rights was fairly applied to all; the perspectives and lives of those to whom the documents did not apply, and the extent to which the ideals or rules in the documents match the reality.

**But in comparison to the current standards, they offer little on democratic ideas and principles.<sup>9</sup> And, the larger story of how the country’s democracy evolved from its extremely limited beginning is missing or very weak.** In some cases, parts of the story are present, but they are without drama and are disconnected from democracy’s overall evolution. To some extent the problem is similar to the one that plagues the World History Standards; the standards are often just too general or too ambitious to be addressed seriously. Part of the problem is that, like the world history standards, these largely exclude the earlier “backstory” of the colonists, losing a chance to provide context for the Founders’ interest in representative government, limited government authority, and religious freedom, for example. (Note: *There is also no backstory on the ideas, culture and experience that Africans brought to America; their*

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<sup>9</sup> See Existing Standards 8.2.1-7, 8.3.1-10, 8.4.1-6, 8.5.

first introduction is in USH#20, already enslaved. Recall that this history was also dropped from world history standards.) But it's also that there is no explicit effort to track democracy's evolution. Major events around the coming and going of key rights go unmarked. Even when they are addressed, it's often discretely, in a way that isn't well-connected to the story of democracy's expansion or contraction. Following are a few examples, especially around voting rights, citizenship, immigration, and Reconstruction.

**2. Voting rights and citizenship rights: These central anchors of equal treatment get almost no explicit attention.** Two standards [#40 and #24 parenthetically--“(e.g., enslaved people, women, free Black people, etc.)]” acknowledge that some Americans don't have voting or citizenship rights; two parenthetically (US2 #9 and 58) reference “violence at voting booths”; one standard each in US1 and US2 is on the women's suffrage movement and one each implicitly reference voting rights in general standards on the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. But the issue mainly goes under the radar. There is no acknowledgement that Native Americans or Asians didn't have voting rights and citizenship rights. In no case is the importance or impact of winning the vote for any of these groups noted (more on this in 3a below). The only standard that explicitly marks any initially disenfranchised group gaining voting rights is USH2#60 when the Voting Rights Act is included in a list of civil rights laws passed in the 60's. There is no mention of the Chinese Exclusion Act or other rules that kept Asians (including, explicitly, Chinese women) out of the country and/or ineligible for citizenship.

**There is no discussion of these rights in the context of closing the gap between American ideals and reality. No discussion of the debates, conditions, or historical context that finally led to these changes. No drama. No detail. A lost opportunity to help students to connect voting to democracy's principles and evolution.**

**3. The success of Reconstruction is underplayed. Its defeat is barely marked.**

Since the current standards were written, much new scholarship has moved into the mainstream on Reconstruction, the role of race, and the Civil Rights Movement. I would expect these standards to be much stronger on these topics than those they replace. In some ways they are, but, again, so much is missing.

**a.** W.E.B Dubois describes Radical Reconstruction as “the finest effort to achieve democracy for the working millions which this world had ever seen.” **The extent of voting, the election of thousands of African Americans, and the policies that voting produced does not come through here,** likely leaving students without a full grasp of the tragedy that was the end of Reconstruction. It also misses the opportunity to connect voting rights to change and policy. As noted above, the only mention of voting and elections during Reconstruction is parenthetical, about violence at voting booths (USH #9).

**b.** To grasp the catastrophe of the loss of Reconstruction, students would need to understand its success; the initial but waning efforts to secure it and the brutality and violence that brought its overthrow; and how long running and widespread this violence were. As noted above, the inspiration isn't adequately conveyed. The brutality and terror that immediately followed is named (#USH1-70 and USH2-9), though the sections are weakened without specific examples. The general impact of Reconstruction's end is acknowledged in standard USH2 #13 asking students to “Examine laws and policies of the Jim Crow era,” including segregation and “unequal access to legal and social structures.” But **there is not adequate acknowledgement that the discrimination and terror went unabated for 100 years.** The focus doesn't return

to Jim Crow, segregation, voting rights, until after World War 2, 40 standards later! Since the last standards, so much scholarship on these years has entered the public discussion. There are so many specifics that could be named. **This hole that should be filled.** The connection between the loss of the effective right to vote with ongoing terror and inequality should be made.

**4. The standards ignore narrative political history, losing the opportunity to show the connections between and among individual and community experiences, social movements, events, public debates, the shaping of public opinion, elections, elected leaders, and changes in policy and laws. Chronology is hidden.**

I know the standards writers wanted to move beyond “holidays and heroes.” But this goes well beyond that and is a great loss: In these standards, stuff happens—but the “why” is less visible than it should be. Causation gets lost. The connection between voters and government is lost. The story is lost. For example, after decades of increasingly intense public debate, Lincoln was elected, the Civil War happened; slavery was ended. Lincoln was assassinated. Andrew Johnson assumes the presidency and prevents Blacks from getting rights under Reconstruction. Grant wins election and sends troops to the South. Hayes wins and the troops are withdrawn. This is a dramatic, high-stakes story that doesn’t come through. Most of these particulars (except Lincoln’s issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation) are not captured in the standards.

**Across the standards, there are almost no elections or leaders—in or out of the White House--making choices, determining policy.** In US History 2, which begins with Reconstruction, Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells and WEB Dubois are mentioned together in one standard. No other civil rights leader is mentioned in any standard. (Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks are mentioned in the intro to Driving Concept 7). Where is Frederick Douglas (who is in USH1)? **In the entire USH2, not one president is mentioned.** There is no Franklin Roosevelt (or Theodore). There is no Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, no LBJ.

We get perspectives about the “impact” of decisions, but the causation is lost. As importantly, “stories” with real people are more memorable. How do you tell a memorable story about this era without these leaders? How do you build students background knowledge when specific events and personalities go unnamed? How do you come to understand the rhythm of politics? How do you interest students in civic and political action, an aim of the standards? For all these reasons, the neglect of politics—the stream that goes back and forth among people/voters, leaders, policy--is a great loss and should be corrected during revisions.

**5. Immigration, immigrants and nativism are absent.** An essential, unique piece of American history is the central role of immigration—of different religious, ethnic, national and racial groups. Why did different groups of immigrants come here? What role did they play in building America? How were they treated initially, to what extent has that changed over time, and how is it different for different groups? When and how did different groups gain citizenship? What does their initial and subsequent treatment tell us about the continuing and incomplete evolution of American democracy and the promise of equality? How have public opinion and laws on immigration changed over time? Students need to understand both that America is largely an immigrant nation, that relative to other nations it has generally been more open--and that unfair treatment and extreme nativism recurs. Students should also get a sense of how and why the “idea” of American identity has changed over the years—with popular terms shifting among assimilation, melting pot, mosaic, diversity, inclusiveness, etc.

**These standards almost completely ignore immigration and immigrants. Specifically,**

a. **Across the two years of secondary history, just 3 standards mention “immigration” or “immigrant.”** Each of these specifically discusses Chinese immigrants, and 2 also discuss American descendants of Mexican Americans (US1 #53; US2#11, 26). There are no other references to immigration or immigrants across the entire secondary American history sequence: No waves of immigrants from the Irish famine or elsewhere; except for the Chinese immigrants building the railroad, no immigrants who play big roles in building the country; no Japanese, Jewish, Italian, Polish, or Korean immigrants. No mentions of immigrants from broad ethnic or racial groups (e.g., Asian- or Latin-Americans).

b. **Apart from immigration, just 6 other standards mention Asian-Americans, Latin-Americans, or any specific European-, Asian-, African- or Latin-American ethnic/nationality groups at all:** Specifically, there is 1 standard on Japanese internment (USH#41); 1 on “roles and rights of... Latinx Americans and Asian Americans” during the Roaring 20’s (USH2#37); 3 on the experiences of veterans and impact of WW2 and discriminatory laws on different groups including Latinx Americans and/or Asian Americans. (USH2#40, 44, 53); and 1 on the contributions of the “Asian American Movement...Chicano Movement, Latinx resistance...” to the Civil Rights Movement. That’s it. There are 2 standards that reference impacts or inequality across “ethnic” groups (US2#16, 35).

c. As noted earlier, **there is no reference to the Chinese exclusion act**, which prohibited Chinese immigration in a singular way that was never done before or since with regard to any other ethnic or racial group. **There is no reference to the 1965 Immigration law** that eliminated national quotas and greatly expanded American diversity. No reference to nativism.

**In contrast, the current standards discuss immigration or immigrants directly in 13 standards**, specifically mentioning immigrants from Asia, China, Ireland, Italy, Northern, Southern, Eastern Europe, Japan, Korea, and Poland, Hispanics, Slavs, Slovaks and Jewish and **non-English speaking immigrants**, many of these groups multiple times. In addition, in a post-immigration context, **Japanese internment, restrictions on Germans and Italians during WW2?, ethnic political coalitions, ethnic tensions** are all mentioned, as are **movements for Asian American and Hispanic-American civil rights and the Chicano Movement**. The issues of assimilation, cultural diversity and rising nativism are the subject of a current standard in both USH2 and USH2. Especially given current attention to immigration, the standards should be guiding courses to prepare our students to understand the nation’s history on this.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment on these standards. I am happy to talk further and look forward to the public engagement.

February 15, 2023

Dear President Thompson, Vice President O’Leary and Members of the DC State Board,

My name is Jessica Sutter. I recently concluded a term as Ward 6 Representative and President of the DC State Board of Education. I am writing today in support of the draft DC Social Studies Standards and to share a few recommendations for your consideration as you move towards approval of these standards.

As many of you know, I have been a strong advocate for the revision of the current but woefully outdated 2006 DC Social Studies Standards. In 2020, I was pleased to serve as the Chair of the SBOE Social Studies Standards Advisory Committee (SSSAC), which was comprised of a committed set of 26 community members who advised the State Board on what was needed to update the learning standards to a level befitting the young people of the District of Columbia. The SSSAC generated a set of Guiding Principles which were adopted by the State Board and transmitted to OSSE in December 2020. Since then, OSSE has been engaged with DC educators and experts in the fields of the social studies – history, geography, economics, civics, etc. - to craft a set of standards that respond to the Guiding Principles set forth by the SSSAC and the State Board.

The current draft standards, on which Public Comment recently concluded, are not perfect, but represent a true sea-change in the kinds of content, skills, and dispositions DC students will be expected to learn as part of the standards for social studies in DC. The new standards are inclusive of people and stories missing from the 2006 standards. A forthright approach to teaching “hard history,” the effort to directly name white supremacy in the standards, the work to reduce Eurocentrism and the addition of both 8<sup>th</sup> grade civics and a focus on online civic reasoning are all essential improvements in the current draft standards.

I have watched the public comment process with appreciation, both for the ways in which the State Board encouraged OSSE to both extend the window for accepting comment and for the outreach individual Board members made to their constituents to ensure that OSSE received robust feedback. Having read some of the feedback shared with the State Board, including the excerpts provided by OSSE in their presentation at your February Working Session, I understand and respect the desire of members of the public to keep pushing on OSSE and the State Board to iterate further on the draft standards until they are perfect. However, I urge members to listen to the words of Melanie Holmes, a member of both the SSSAC and OSSE’s Technical Writing Committee, who submitted public comment in January. Ms. Holmes was forthright in her feedback, including a critique of the way in which OSSE valued the work of the educators engaged as standards writers. Even with these critiques, she concludes, *“...as a member of the SSSAC, I am thrilled that the vision of the Guiding Principles was fully embraced and actualized by my fellow writers. I believe the Social Studies curriculum that will inevitably come from the new standards can create “windows and mirrors” for students with the potential to build a more productive city and society. I can only hope this work is valued by the community.”*

Like Ms. Holmes, I, too, think that the current draft standards adhere to the vision of the Guiding Principles and that these standards – as they are – have the potential to truly transform the way in which DC young people are prepared for their lives as citizens in our civil society. While not perfect, they are far better and more deserving of our children’s time and attention than the current 16 year old standards in use in our schools at present.

With that in mind, I ask the Board to consider three powerful actions over the remainder of this year:

1. Please **vote to approve** the revised DC Social Studies Standards when OSSE brings them for your consideration this spring. Please also **commit to a 10 year maximum timeline for the next revision of these standards**. Given the three-year process for the current update, this might mean beginning a review by the State Board in eight years (2031) with an expected revision between 2032-2033.
  
2. Please **work closely with OSSE on the roll-out of the revised standards** to ensure that teacher professional knowledge is valued, parents are informed, and state-level capacity for teaching and learning of social studies in DC is built in this process. The State Board might:
  - a. **Encourage the writing of an open-source voluntary state curriculum**, like our neighboring Maryland has, to align with the revised standards. While such curriculum would not be mandated for use in all schools, it would provide a common set of tools, resources, pacing guides, etc. aligned with the new standards and available, freely and equally, to all LEAs. This curriculum can and should be created by educators. So...
  - b. **Support efforts to hire & compensate DC educators as the authors of a voluntary curriculum or of illustrative units of study for the revised standards**. Then, have those units. The revised standards set DC apart from many other states in terms of the content and scope of what is covered in K-12. It will be unlikely that teachers or LEAs will have an easy time finding text books or ready-made curriculum that will align with our new standards. It is also unrealistic to expect that individual LEAs or teachers themselves will have the capacity to create aligned curriculum for the full scope of the standards. Instead, having teachers from different LEAs compensated to come together and create aligned materials with OSSE will provide both professional development for educators and a curriculum that is of and from DC.
  - c. **Build opportunities to educate parents on the revised standards**. Parents are their children's first teachers. They will also need support in understanding the kinds of changes in the way their children are learning history and civics, which are likely quite different from how they were taught in school.
  
3. **Please consider a path to assessing the quality and fidelity of the implementation of the revised standards in LEAs statewide**. This may be a periodic statewide assessment, like the DC Science Assessment, a performance assessment (i.e., Mikva Soapbox or We The People mock Congressional Hearing), an observational assessment of classroom instruction in LEAs or something else. Nonetheless, what gets measured gets done and the new standards will only have the power to affect our students if they are taught in all grade levels in all schools.

Thank you for your consideration of my recommendations and for your service on the State Board.

Sincerely,

Jessica Sutter, PhD

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), a national non-profit educational and advocacy organization, we are appreciative of the enormous amount of time and effort that have gone into the DC Social Studies Standards review process.

As a proud DC resident and educator, I am writing to share my concern with the inclusion of caste under the “Civics, Government, and Human Rights” anchor standard, substandard “World Governments.” I would like to point out that the mention of caste is inconsistent with the language of specific grade-level standards that discuss social hierarchies, such as WH1.Geo.HC.26. To ensure consistency and clarity for educators and students, I strongly recommend that “caste” be removed from this anchor standard. As you may be aware, the concept of caste is often associated with South Asian heritage and culture, whereas governments worldwide throughout history have implemented various forms of social hierarchies. Thus, using the broader term “social hierarchy” ensures that a particular subregion of the world is not singled out. This small change would be in alignment with the DCPS’s commitment to inclusivity and pluralism as an “anchoring” principle in these new social studies standards.

As an organization based in Washington, DC, HAF has great relationships with local educators and robust professional development materials, as well as classroom materials to assist educators in understanding the nuanced complexities of hierarchical systems throughout the history of India.

We would value the opportunity to provide a [professional development workshop](#) on this complex issue with teachers in the district. Depending on the time allotted, we could tailor our content to better meet the needs of your teachers and students as well as include time to work on lesson plans and build out potential classroom activities. I’d be happy to discuss the [content](#) and show some of our slides in a follow-up call. We are also offering a version of this training for the community on [February 26, 2023 at 3:00 – 5:00 pm ET](#). This is a free webinar and you can [sign-up here](#).

I would welcome the opportunity to speak to you further about any of the topics mentioned above. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [shereen@hinduamerican.org](mailto:shereen@hinduamerican.org) if you have questions about HAF resources or wish to request professional development training for educators.

Sincerely,  
Shereen

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**SHEREEN BHALLA, PhD**  
Senior Director of Education, Diversity, and Inclusion  
Hindu American Foundation

e: [shereen@hinduamerican.org](mailto:shereen@hinduamerican.org)  
p: (202) 223-8222  
social media: @hinduamerican



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